# Grace Harlowe's Second Year at Overton College

The College Girls Series

Jessie Graham Flower, A.M.

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To Doris from
Robert
Christmas 1918

The Door was Cautiously Opened to Mrs. Elwood.

*Frontispiece.*

# Grace Harlowe's Second Year at Overton College

By

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# Grace Harlowe's Second Year at Overton College

## CHAPTER I

### OVERTON CLAIMS HER OWN

"OH, there goes Grace Harlowe! Grace! Grace! Wait a minute!" A curly-haired little girl hastily deposited her suit case, golf bag, two magazines and a box of candy on the nearest bench and ran toward a quartette of girls who had just left the train that stood puffing noisily in front of the station at Overton.

The tall, gray-eyed young woman in blue turned at the call, and, running back, met the other half way. "Why, Arline!" she exclaimed. "I didn't see you when I got off the train." The two girls exchanged affectionate greetings; then Arline was passed on to Miriam Nesbit, Anne Pierson and J. Elfreda Briggs, who, with Grace Harlowe, had come back to Overton College to begin their second year's course of study.

Those who have followed the fortunes of Grace Harlowe and her friends through their

four years of high school life are familiar with what happened during "Grace Harlowe's Plebe Year at High School," the story of her freshman year. "Grace Harlowe's Sophomore Year at High School" gave a faithful account of the doings of Grace and her three friends, Nora O'Malley, Anne Pierson and Jessica Bright, during their sophomore days. "Grace Harlowe's Junior Year at High School" and "Grace Harlowe's Senior Year at High School" told of her third and fourth years in Oakdale High School and of how completely Grace lived up to the high standard of honor she had set for herself.

After their graduation from high school the four devoted chums spent a summer in Europe; then came the inevitable separation. Nora and Jessica had elected to go to an eastern conservatory of music, while Anne and Grace had chosen Overton College. Miriam Nesbit, a member of the Phi Sigma Tau, had also decided for Overton, and what befell the three friends as Overton College freshmen has been narrated in "Grace Harlowe's First Year at Overton College."

Now September had rolled around again and the station platform of the town of Overton was dotted with groups of students laden with suit cases, golf bags and the paraphernalia belong-

ing peculiarly to the college girl. Overton College was about to claim its own. The joyous greetings called out by happy voices testified to the fact that the next best thing to leaving college to go home was leaving home to come back to college.

"Where is Ruth?" was Grace's first question as she surveyed Arline with smiling, affectionate eyes.

"She'll be here directly," answered Arline. "She is looking after the trunks. She is the most indefatigable little laborer I ever saw. From the time we began to get ready to come back to Overton she refused positively to allow me to lift my finger. She is always hunting something to do. She says she has acquired the work habit so strongly that she can't break herself of it, and I believe her," finished Arline with a sigh of resignation. "Here she comes now."

An instant later the demure young woman seen approaching was surrounded by laughing girls.

"Stop working and speak to your little friends," laughed Miriam Nesbit. "We've just heard bad reports of you."

"I know what you've heard!" exclaimed Ruth, her plain little face alight with happiness. "Arline has been grumbling. You haven't any

idea what a fault-finding person she is. She lectures me all the time."

"For working," added Arline. "Ruth will have work enough and to spare this year. Can you blame me for trying to make her take life easy for a few days?"

"Blame you?" repeated Elfreda. "I would have lectured her night and day, and tied her up to keep her from work, if necessary."

"Now you see just how much sympathy these worthy sophomores have for you," declared Arline.

"Do you know whether 19— is all here yet?" asked Anne.

"I don't know a single thing more about it than do you girls," returned Arline. "Suppose we go directly to our houses, and then meet at Vinton's for dinner tonight. I don't yearn for a Morton House dinner. The meals there won't be strictly up to the mark for another week yet. When the house is full again, the standard of Morton House cooking will rise in a day, but until then—let us thank our stars for Vinton's. Are you going to take the automobile bus? We shall save time."

"We might as well ride," replied Grace, looking inquiringly at her friends. "My luggage is heavy and the sooner I arrive at Wayne Hall the better pleased I shall be."

"Are you to have the same rooms as last year?" asked Ruth Denton.

"I suppose so, unless something unforeseen has happened."

"Will there be any vacancies at your house this year?" inquired Arline.

"Four, I believe," replied Anne Pierson. "Were you thinking of changing? We'd be glad to have you with us."

"I'd love to come, but Morton House is like home to me. Mrs. Kane calls me the Morton House Mascot, and declares her house would go to rack and ruin without me. She only says that in fun, of course."

"I think you'd make an ideal mascot for the sophomore basketball team this year," laughed Grace. "Will you accept the honor?"

"With both hands," declared Arline. "Now, we had better start, or we'll never get back to Vinton's. Ruth, you have my permission to walk with Anne as far as your corner. It's five o'clock now. Shall we agree to meet at Vinton's at half-past six? That will give us an hour and a half to get the soot off our faces, and if the expressman should experience a change of heart and deliver our trunks we might possibly appear in fresh gowns. The possibility is very remote, however. I know, because I had to wait four days for mine last year. It was sent to the

wrong house, and traveled gaily about the campus, stopping for a brief season at three different houses before it landed on Morton House steps. I hung out of the window for a whole morning watching for it. Then, when it did come, I fairly had to fly downstairs and out on the front porch to claim it, or they would have hustled it off again."

"That's why I appointed myself chief trunk tender," said Ruth slyly. "That trunk story is not new to me. This time your trunk will be waiting on the front porch for you, Arline."

"If it is, then I'll forgive you your other sins," retorted Arline. "That is, if you promise to come and room with me. Isn't she provoking, girls? I have a whole room to myself and she won't come. Father wishes her to be with me, too."

"I'd love to be with Arline," returned Ruth bravely, "but I can't afford it, and I can't accept help from any one. I must work out my own problem in my own way. You understand, don't you?" She looked appealingly from one to the other of her friends, who nodded sympathetically.

"She's a courageous Ruth, isn't she?" smiled Arline, patting Ruth on the shoulder.

At Ruth's corner they said good-bye to her. Then hailing a bus the five girls climbed into it.

"So far we haven't seen any of our old friends," remarked Grace as they drove along Maple Avenue. "I suppose they haven't arrived yet. We are here early this year."

"I'd rather be early than late," rejoined Miriam. "Last year we were late. Don't you remember? There were dozens of girls at the station when we arrived. Arline and Ruth are the first real friends we have seen so far. Where are Mabel Ashe and Frances Marlton, Emma Dean and Gertrude Wells, not to mention Virginia Gaines?"

"If I'm not mistaken," said Elfreda slowly, her brows drawing together in an ominous frown, "there are two people just ahead of us whom we have reason to remember."

Almost at the moment of her declaration the girls had espied two young women loitering along the walk ahead of them whose very backs were too familiar to be mistaken.

"It's Miss Wicks and Miss Hampton, isn't it?" asked Anne.

Grace nodded. They were now too close to the young women for further speech. A moment more and the bus containing the five girls had passed the loitering pair. Neither side had made the slightest sign of recognition. A sudden silence fell upon the little company in the bus.

"It is too bad to begin one's sophomore year by cutting two Overton girls, isn't it?" said Grace, in a rueful tone.

"Overton girls!" sniffed Elfreda. "I consider neither Miss Wicks nor Miss Hampton real Overton girls."

"They should be by this time," reminded Miriam Nesbit mischievously. "They have been here a year longer than we have."

"Years don't count," retorted Elfreda. "It's having the true Overton spirit that counts. You girls understand what I mean, even if Miriam tries to pretend she doesn't."

"Of course we understand, Elfreda," soothed Anne. "Miriam was merely trying to tease you."

"Don't you suppose I know that?" returned Elfreda. "I know, too, that you don't wish me to say anything against those two girls. All right, I won't, but I warn you, I'll keep on thinking uncomplimentary things about them. Last June, after that ghost party, I promised Grace I would never try to get even with Alberta Wicks and Mary Hampton, but I didn't promise to like them, and if they attempt to interfere with me this year, they'll be sorry."

"Oh, there's the campus!" exclaimed Arline as, turning into College Street, the long green slope, broken at intervals by magnificent old

trees, burst upon their view. "Hello, Overton Hall!" she cried, waving her hand to that stately building. "Doesn't the campus look like green plush, though! I love every inch of it, don't you?" She looked at her companions and, seeing the light from her face reflected on theirs, needed no verbal answer to her question. A moment later she signaled to the driver to stop the bus. "I shall have to leave you here," she said. "I'll see you at Vinton's at six-thirty."

Grace handed out her luggage to her, saying: "You have so much to carry, Arline. Shall I help you?"

"Mercy, no," laughed Arline. "'Every woman her own porter,' is my motto." Opening her suit case she stuffed the candy and magazines into it, snapping it shut with a triumphant click. Then with it in one hand, her golf bag in the other, she set off across the campus at a swinging pace.

"She's little, but she has plenty of independence and energy," laughed Miriam. "Hurrah, girls, there's Wayne Hall just ahead of us."

It was only a short ride from the spot where Arline had left them to Wayne Hall. Grace sprang from the bus almost before it stopped, and ran up the stone walk, her three friends following. Before she had time to ring the door bell, however, the door opened and Emma Dean

rushed out to greet them. "Welcome to old Wayne," she cried, shaking hands all around. "I heard Mrs. Elwood say this morning you would be here late this afternoon. I've been over to Morton House, consoling a homesick cousin who is sure she is going to hate college. I've been out since before luncheon. Had it at Martell's with my dolorous, misanthropic relative. I tried to get her in here, but everything was taken. We are to have four freshmen, you know."

"I knew there were four places last June, but am rather surprised that no sophomores applied for rooms. Have you seen the new girls?"

Emma shook her head. "They hadn't arrived when I left this morning. I don't know whether they are here now or not. I'm to have one of them. Virginia Gaines has gone to Livingstone Hall. She has a friend there. Two of the new girls will have her room. Florence Ransom will have to take the fourth."

"Where's Mrs. Elwood?" asked Miriam.

"She went over to see her sister this afternoon. She's likely to return at any minute," answered Emma.

"Do you think we ought to wait for her?" Grace asked anxiously.

"Hardly," said Anne, picking up her bag, which she had deposited on the floor.

"Come on, I'll lead the way," volunteered Elfreda, starting up the stairs.

"Won't Mrs. Elwood be surprised when she comes home? She'll find us not only here, but settled," laughed Grace.

But it was Grace rather than Mrs. Elwood who was destined to receive the surprise.

## CHAPTER II

### THE UNFORESEEN

FOLLOWING Elfreda, the girls ran upstairs as fast as their weight of bags and suit cases would permit. Miriam pushed open her door, which stood slightly ajar, with the end of her suit case. "Any one at home?" she inquired saucily as she stepped inside.

"Looks like the same old room," remarked Elfreda. "No, it isn't, either. We have a new chair. We needed it, too. You may sit in it occasionally, if you're good, Miriam."

"Thank you," replied Miriam. "For that gracious permission you shall have one piece of candy out of a five-pound box I have in my trunk."

"Not even that," declared Elfreda positively. "I said good-bye to candy last July. I've lost ten pounds since I went home from school, and I'm going to haunt the gymnasium every spare moment that I have. I hope I shall lose ten more; then I'll be down to one hundred and forty pounds and—" Elfreda stopped.

"And what?" queried Miriam.

"I can make the basketball team," finished Elfreda. "What is going on in the hall, I won-

der?'' Stepping to the door she called, ''What's the matter, Grace? Can't you get into your room?''

''Evidently not,'' laughed Grace. ''It is locked. I suppose Mrs. Elwood locked it to prevent the new girls from straying in and taking possession.''

''H-m-m!'' ejaculated Elfreda, walking over to the door and examining the keyhole. ''Your supposition is all wrong, Grace. The door is locked from the inside. The key is in it.''

''Then what—'' began Grace.

''Yes, what?'' quizzed Elfreda dryly.

'' 'There was a door to which I had no key,' '' quoted Miriam, as she joined the group.

''Don't tease, Miriam,'' returned Grace, ''even through the medium of Omar Khayyam. The key is a reality, but there is some one on the other side of that door who doesn't belong there. Whether she is not aware that she is a trespasser I do not know. However, we shall soon learn.'' Grace rapped determinedly on one of the upper panels of the door.

''I'll help you,'' volunteered Elfreda.

''And I,'' agreed Anne.

''My services are needed, too,'' said Miriam Nesbit.

Four fists pounded energetically on the door. There was an exclamation, the sound of hasty

steps, the turning of a key in the lock, and the door was flung open. Facing them stood a young woman no taller than Anne, whose heavy eyebrows met in a straight line, and who looked ready for battle at the first word.

"Will you kindly explain the reason for this tumult?" she asked in a freezing voice.

"We were rather noisy," admitted Grace, "but we did not understand why the door should be locked from the inside."

"Is it necessary that you should know?" asked the black-browed girl severely.

Grace's clear-cut face flushed. "I think we are talking at cross purposes," she said quietly. "The room you are using belongs to my friend Anne Pierson and to me. During our freshman year it was ours, and when we left here last June it was with the understanding that we should have it again on our return to Overton."

"I know nothing of any such arrangement," returned the other girl crossly. "The room pleases me, consequently I shall retain it. Kindly refrain from disturbing me further." With this significant remark the door was slammed in the faces of the astonished girls. A second later the click of the key in the lock told them that force alone could effect an entrance to the room.

"Open that door at once," stormed Elfreda,

beating an angry tattoo on the panel with her clenched fist.

From the other side of the door came no sound.

"Never mind, Elfreda," said Grace, fighting down her anger. "Mrs. Elwood will be here soon. There is some misunderstanding about the rooms. I am sure of it."

"See here, Grace Harlowe, you are not going to give up your room to that beetle-browed anarchist, are you?" demanded Elfreda wrathfully.

A peal of laughter went up from three young throats.

"You are the funniest girl I ever knew, J. Elfreda Briggs," remarked Miriam Nesbit between laughs. "That new girl looks exactly like an anarchist—that is, like pictures of them I've seen in the newspapers."

"That's why I thought of it, too," grinned Elfreda. "I once saw a picture of an anarchist who blew up a public building and he might have been this young person's brother. She looks exactly like him."

"Stop talking about anarchists and talk about rooms," said Anne. "I must find some place to put my luggage. Besides, time is flying. Remember, we are to be at Vinton's at half-past six."

"I should say time *was* flying!" exclaimed Grace, casting a hurried glance at her watch. "It's ten minutes to six now. It will take us fifteen minutes to walk to Vinton's. That leaves twenty-five minutes in which to get ready."

"There is no hope that the trunks will arrive in time for us to dress," said Miriam positively. "Come into our room and we'll wash the dust from our hands and faces and do our hair over again."

"All right," agreed Grace, casting a longing glance at the closed door. "We'll have to put our bags in your room, too. I don't wish to leave them in the hall for unwary students to stumble over."

"Bring them along," returned Miriam. "No one shall accuse us of inhospitality."

"I wish Mrs. Elwood were here." Grace looked worried. "We mustn't stay at Vinton's later than half-past seven o'clock. There are so many little things to be attended to, as well as the important question of our room."

Arriving at Vinton's at exactly half-past six o'clock, they found Arline Thayer and Ruth Denton waiting for them at a table on which were covers laid for six.

"We've been waiting for ages!" exclaimed Arline.

"But you said half-past six, and it is only one

minute past that now," reminded Grace, showing Arline her watch.

"Of course, you are on time," laughed the little girl. "I should have explained that I'm hungry. That is why I speak in ages instead of minutes."

"Your explanation is accepted," proclaimed Elfreda, screwing her face into a startling resemblance to a fussy instructor in freshman trigonometry and using his exact words.

The ready laughter proclaimed instant recognition of the unfortunate professor.

"You can look like any one you choose, can't you, Elfreda?" said Arline admiringly. "I think your imitations of people are wonderful."

"Nothing very startling about them," remarked the stout girl lightly. "I'd give all my ability to make faces to be able to sing even 'America' through once and keep on the key. I can't sing and never could. When I was a little girl in school the teachers never would let me sing with the rest of the children, because I led them all off the key. It was very nice at the beginning of the term, and I sang with the other children anywhere from once to half a dozen times, never longer than that. I had the strongest voice in the room and whatever note I sang the rest of the children sang. It was dreadful," finished Elfreda reminiscently.

"It must have been," agreed Miriam Nesbit. "Can you remember how you looked when you were little, Elfreda?"

"I don't have to tax my brain to remember," answered Elfreda. "Ma has photographs of me at every age from six months up to date. To satisfy your curiosity, however," her face hardened until it took on the stony expression of the new student who had locked Grace out of her room, "I will state that—"

"The Anarchist! the Anarchist!" exclaimed Ruth and Miriam together.

"What are you two talking about?" asked Ruth Denton.

"About the Anarchist," teased Miriam. "Wait until you see her."

"You have seen her," laughed Grace. "Elfreda just imitated her to perfection." Thereupon Grace related their recent unpleasant experience to Arline and Ruth.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Arline.

"We will see Mrs. Elwood as soon as we return to Wayne Hall, and ask her to gently, but firmly, request the Anarchist to move elsewhere."

"Why do you call her the Anarchist?" asked Arline.

"Elfreda, please repeat your imitation," re-

quested Miriam, her black eyes sparkling with fun.

Elfreda complied obediently.

"You understand now, don't you?" laughed Grace.

"I should be very stupid if I didn't," declared Arline.

"Of course she's dark, with eyebrows an inch wide. You can't expect me to give an imitation of anything like that," apologized Elfreda.

"I think I should recognize her on sight," smiled Ruth Denton.

"We are miles off our original subject," remarked Grace. "Elfreda hasn't told us how she looked as a child."

"All right. I'll tell you now," volunteered J. Elfreda graciously. "I had round, staring blue eyes and a fat face. I wore my hair down my back in curls—that is, when it was done up on curlers the night before—and it was almost tow color. I had red cheeks and was ashamed of them, and my stocky, square-shouldered figure was anything but sylphlike. I was not beautiful, but I was very well satisfied with myself, and to call me 'Fatty' was to offer me deadly insult. That is about as much as I can remember," finished the stout girl.

"Really, Elfreda, while you were describing yourself I could fairly see you," smiled Arline.

"Now it's your turn," reminded Elfreda. "I imagine you were a cunning little girl."

Arline flushed at the implied compliment. "Father used to call me 'Daffydowndilly,' " she began. "My hair was much lighter than it is now, but it has always been curly. I am afraid I used to be very vain, for I loved to stand and smile at myself in the mirror simply because I liked my yellow curls and was fascinated with my own smile. No one told me I was vain, for Mother died when I was a baby, and even my governess laughed to see me worship my own reflection. When I was twelve years old, Father engaged a governess who was different from the others. She was a widow and had to support herself. She was highly educated and one of the sweetest women I have ever known. When she took charge of me I was a vain, stupid little tyrant, but she soon made me over. She remained with me until I entered a prep school, then an uncle whom she had never seen died and left her some money. She's coming to Overton to see me some day. Overton is her Alma Mater, too."

"You are next, Grace," nodded Ruth.

"There isn't much to tell about me," began Grace. "I was the tomboy of Oakdale. I loved to climb trees and play baseball and marbles. I was thin as a lath and like live wire. My face

was rather thin, too, and I remember I cried a whole afternoon because a little girl at school called me 'saucer-eyes.' There wasn't a suspicion of curl in my hair, and I wore it in two braids. I never thought much about myself, because I was always too busy. I was forever falling in with suspicious looking characters and bringing them home to be fed. Mother used to throw up her hands in despair at the acquaintances I made. Then, too, I had a propensity for bestowing my personal possessions on those who, in my opinion, needed them. Mother and I were not always of the same opinion. I wore my everyday coat to church for a whole winter as a punishment for having given away my best one without consulting her. With me it was a case of act first and think afterward. I don't believe I was particularly mischievous, but I had a habit of diving into things that kept Mother in a state of constant apprehension. Father used to laugh at my pranks and tell Mother not to worry about me. He used to declare that no matter into what I plunged I would land right side up with care. I was never at the head of my classes in school, but I was never at the foot of them. I was what one might call a happy medium. My little-girl life was a very happy one, and full to the brim with all sorts of pleasant happenings."

"I never heard you say so much about yourself before, Grace," observed Elfreda.

"I'm usually too much interested in other people's affairs to think of my own," laughed Grace. "I have never heard Anne say much about her childhood, either. She must have had all sorts of interesting experiences."

"Mine was more exciting than pleasant," returned Anne. "Practically speaking, I was brought up in the theatre and knew a great deal more about things theatrical than I did about dolls and childish games. I was a solemn looking little thing and wore my hair bobbed and tied up with a ribbon. I never cried about the things that most children cry over, but I would stand in the wings and weep by the hour over the pathetic parts of the different plays we put on. Father was a character man in a stock company. We lived in New York City and I used to frequently go to the theatre with him. My father wished me to become a professional, but my mother was opposed to it. When I was sixteen I played in a company for a short time. Then mother and sister and I went to Oakdale to live, and the nicest part of my life began. There I met Grace and Miriam and two other girls who are among my dearest friends. Nothing very exciting has ever happened to me, and even though I have appeared before the public

I haven't as much to tell as the rest of you have."

"But countless things must have happened to you in the theatre," persisted Arline, looking curiously at Anne.

"Not so many as you might imagine," replied Anne. Then she said quickly, "Miriam must have been an interesting little girl."

"I was a very haughty young person," answered Miriam. "In the Oakdale Grammar School I was known as the Princess. Do you remember that, Grace?"

Grace nodded. "Miriam used to order the girls in her room about as though they were her subjects," she declared. "She had two long black braids of hair and her cheeks were always pink. She was the tallest girl in her room and the teachers used to say she was the prettiest."

"I was a regular tyrant," went on Miriam. "I had a frightful temper. I was a snob, too, and looked upon girls whose parents were poor with the utmost contempt."

"Miriam Nesbit, you can't be describing yourself!" exclaimed Arline incredulously.

"Ask Grace if I am not giving an accurate description of the Miriam Nesbit of those days," challenged Miriam.

"It isn't fair to ask me," fenced Grace. "You always invited me to your parties."

"There, you can draw your own conclusions," retorted Miriam triumphantly. "I don't object to telling about my past shortcomings as I have at last outgrown a few of my disagreeable traits."

"Were you and Grace friends then?" asked Arline.

"We played together and went to each other's houses, but we were never very chummy," explained Grace. "We were both too headstrong and too fond of our own way to be close friends. It was after we entered high school that we began to find out that we liked each other, wasn't it, Miriam?"

"Yes," returned Miriam, looking affectionately at her friend. In two sentences Grace had effectually bridged a yawning gap in Miriam's early high school days of which the latter was heartily ashamed.

"Every one has told a tale but Ruth," declared Elfreda. "Now, Ruth, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Not much," said Ruth, shaking her head. "So far, my life has been too gray to warrant recording. That is, up to the time I came to Overton," she added, smiling gratefully on the little circle. "My freshman year was a very happy one, thanks to you girls."

"But when you were a child you must have

had a few good times that stand out in your memory," persisted Elfreda.

Ruth's face took on a hunted expression. Her mouth set in hard lines. "No," she said shortly. "There was nothing worth remembering. Perhaps I'll tell you some day, but not now. Please don't think me hateful and disobliging, but I don't wish to talk of myself."

Arline Thayer eyed Ruth with displeasure. "I don't see why you should say that, Ruth. We have all talked of ourselves," she said coldly.

Ruth flushed deeply. She felt the note of censure in Arline's voice.

"I think we had better go," announced Grace, consulting her watch. "It is now half-past seven. We ought to be at Wayne Hall by eight o'clock. You know the Herculean labor I have before me."

"Herculean labor is a good name for our coming task," chuckled Anne. "The Anarchist will make Wayne Hall resound with her vengeful cries when she is thrust out of the room with all her possessions."

Jesting light-heartedly over the coming encounter, the diners strolled out of Vinton's and down College Street in the direction of the campus. Arline was the first to leave them. Her good night to the four girls from Wayne

Hall was cordial in the extreme, but to Ruth she was almost distant. A little later on they said good night to Ruth, who looked ready to cry.

"Cheer up," comforted Grace, who was walking with Ruth. "Arline will be all right to-morrow."

"I hope so," responded Ruth mournfully. "I did not mean to make her angry, only there are some things of which I cannot speak to any one."

"I understand," rejoined Grace, wondering what Ruth's secret cross was. "Good night, Ruth."

Elfreda, Miriam and Anne bade Ruth good-night in turn.

"Now, for the tug of war," declared Elfreda as they hurried up the steps of Wayne Hall. "On to the battlefield and down with the Anarchist!"

## CHAPTER III

### MRS. ELWOOD TO THE RESCUE

AS Grace approached the curtained archway that divided the living-room from the hall she could not help wishing that she might have settled the affair without Mrs. Elwood's assistance. She was not afraid to approach Mrs. Elwood, who was the soul of good nature, but Grace disliked the idea of the scene that she felt sure would follow. The young woman now occupying the room that she and Anne had re-engaged for their sophomore year would contest their right to occupy it. Mrs. Elwood would be obliged to set her foot down firmly. It would all be extremely disagreeable, Grace reflected. Then the memory of the Anarchist's glaring incivility returned, and without further hesitation Grace walked into the living-room, followed by her companions.

Mrs. Elwood, who was sitting in her favorite chair reading a magazine, looked up absently, then, staring incredulously at the newcomers, trotted across the room, both hands outstretched in welcome. "Why, Miss Harlowe and Miss Nesbit, I had given you up for to-night. Here are Miss Pierson and Miss Briggs, too. I'm so

glad to see you. When did you arrive? I thought there was no train from the north before nine o'clock."

"Didn't Miss Dean tell you we had arrived?" asked Grace, as Mrs. Elwood shook hands in turn with each girl.

"I haven't seen Miss Dean. She went out before I came home," replied Mrs. Elwood.

"Wait until we catch the faithless Emma," threatened Anne. "She promised to be our herald. We arrived here at a little after five o'clock. We did not stay here long, for Miss Thayer, of Morton House, invited us to dinner at Vinton's."

"How do you like the way I fixed your room this year?" asked Mrs. Elwood.

"We haven't been in it yet," answered Grace. "That is, we went only as far as the door."

"Oh, then you must see it at once," said Mrs. Elwood briskly. "I have had it repapered. There is a new rug on the floor, too, and I have put a new Morris chair in and taken out one of the cane-seated chairs."

"No wonder the Anarchist refuses to vacate," muttered Elfreda.

"What did you say, my dear?" remarked Mrs. Elwood amiably.

"Oh, I was just talking nonsense," averred Elfreda solemnly.

"I won't keep you girls out of your rooms any longer. I know you must be tired from your long journey. Come upstairs at once."

Mrs. Elwood had already crossed the room and was out in the hall, her foot on the first step of the stairs. The girls exchanged glances. There was a half smothered chuckle from Elfreda, then Grace hurried after their good-natured landlady. "Wait a minute, Mrs. Elwood," began Grace, "I have something to tell you before you go upstairs. This afternoon, when we arrived, we went directly to our rooms. The door of our room was locked, however. We knocked repeatedly, and it was at last opened by a young woman who said the room was hers and refused to allow us to enter it."

During this brief recital Mrs. Elwood looked first amazed, then incredulous. Her final expression was one of lively displeasure, and with the exclamation, "I might have known it!" she marched upstairs with the air of a grenadier, the girls filing in her wake. Pausing before the door she listened intently. The sound of some one moving within could be heard distinctly. Mrs. Elwood rapped sharply on the door. The footsteps halted; after a few seconds the sound began again.

"She thinks we have come back," whispered Elfreda.

"So we have," smiled Grace, "with reinforcements."

Her smile was reflected on the faces of her friends. Mrs. Elwood, however, did not smile. Two red spots burned high on her cheeks, her little blue eyes snapped. Again she knocked, this time accompanying the action with: "Open this door, instantly. Mrs. Elwood wishes to speak with you."

"Do not imagine that you can gain entrance to this room through any such pretense," announced a contemptuous voice from the other side of the door. "I believe I stated that I did not wish to be disturbed."

"And I state that you must open the door," commanded Mrs. Elwood. "You are not addressing one of the students. This is Mrs. Elwood."

A grating of the key in the lock followed, then the door was cautiously opened far enough to allow a scowling head to be thrust out. The instant the Anarchist's narrowed eyes rested on Mrs. Elwood her belligerent manner changed. She swung the door wide, remarking in cold apology: "Pray, pardon me, Mrs. Elwood. I believed that a number of rude, ill-bred young women whom I had the misfortune to encounter earlier in the day were renewing their attempts to annoy me."

"There are no such young women at Wayne Hall," retorted Mrs. Elwood, who was thoroughly angry. "The majority of the young women here were with me last year, and not one of them answers your description. Really, Miss Atkins, you must know that you are trespassing. This room belongs to Miss Harlowe and Miss Pierson. It was theirs last year and they arranged with me last June to occupy it again during their sophomore year. How you happened to be here is more than I can say. I believe I gave you the room at the end of the hall."

"The room to which you assigned me did not meet with my approval," was the calm reply. "I prefer this room."

"You can't have it," returned Mrs. Elwood decisively.

"But I insist upon remaining where I am," persisted the intruder. "If necessary, I will allow Miss Harlowe or her roommate to occupy the other half of the room."

"I have told you that you can not have the room," exclaimed Mrs. Elwood, eyeing her obstinate antagonist with growing disfavor. "If you do not wish to take the room at the end of the hall, then I have nothing else in the house to offer you. No doubt you can find board to suit you in some other house."

"I wish to stay here," returned the Anarchist

stubbornly. "Let Miss Harlowe have the room at the end of the hall."

Sheer exasperation held Mrs. Elwood silent for a moment. The Anarchist peered defiantly at her from under her bushy eyebrows. She made no move toward vacating the room of which she had so coolly taken possession.

"We'll go for our bags and suit cases, Mrs. Elwood," suggested Grace wickedly. "We left them in Miriam's room."

"Very well," returned the intrepid landlady. "Your room will be ready for you when you return."

"That is what I call a stroke of genius on your part, Grace," remarked Miriam, as they entered her room. "Mrs. Elwood can deal with the Anarchist more summarily without an audience."

"It must be very humiliating for that Miss Atkins," mused Anne, "but it's her own fault."

"Of course it's her own fault," emphasized Elfreda. "She doesn't appear to know when the pleasure of her company is requested elsewhere."

"Shall we go now?" asked Anne, lifting her heavy suit case preparatory to moving.

"Not yet," counseled Grace. "We must give her time enough to get out of sight before we appear."

Elfreda boldly took up her station at the door

and reported faithfully the enemy's movements. After a twenty minutes' wait, the stout girl closed the door with a bang, exclaiming triumphantly: "She's gone! She just paraded down the hall carrying her goods and chattels. Mrs. Elwood stalked behind carrying a hat box. She looked like an avenging angel. Hurry up, now, and move in before the Anarchist changes her mind and comes back to take possession all over again."

Grace and Anne lost no time in taking Elfreda's advice. Five minutes later they were back in their old room. "Stay here a while, girls," invited Grace. Miriam and Elfreda had assisted their friends with their luggage.

"How nice your room looks," praised Miriam. "I like that wall paper. It is so dainty. Your favorite blue, too, Grace. I wonder if Mrs. Elwood knew that blue was your color?"

"I suppose so," returned Grace. "Two-thirds of my clothes are blue, you know. I must run downstairs and thank her for championing our cause. I won't be gone five minutes."

"We must go," declared Miriam. "We are going to begin unpacking to-night."

Running lightly down the stairs, Grace thrust her head between the portieres that separated the living-room from the hall. Mrs. Elwood sat reading her magazine as placidly as though

nothing had happened within the last hour to disturb her equanimity.

"Thank you ever so much, Mrs. Elwood," said Grace gratefully, walking up to the dignified matron and shyly offering her hand.

"Nonsense, child!" was the reply. "You have nothing for which to thank me. You don't suppose I would allow a new boarder to infringe upon the rights of my old girls, do you?"

"No," admitted Grace. "I'm sorry that things had to happen that way," she added regretfully.

"Don't you worry about it any more, Miss Harlowe," comforted the older woman. "It's nothing you are to blame for. You had the first right to the room. I gave this girl Miss Gaines's old room. Her roommate is to be a freshman, too. She hasn't arrived yet. Miss Atkins decided to pick out her own room, I imagine. Evidently she took a fancy to yours. As soon as you girls had gone, she gave me one awful look, gathered up her belongings, and went to the other room without another word. I picked up two or three things she dropped and carried them down for her. I wouldn't be sorry if she went to some other house to board. She looks like a trouble maker."

Grace was of the same opinion, but did not say so. Always eager to excuse other people's

shortcomings, she found it hard to account for the feeling of strong dislike that had risen within her during her first encounter with the young woman Elfreda had laughingly named the Anarchist. She had hoped that the four freshmen at Wayne Hall would be girls whom it would be a pleasure to know. She had looked forward to meeting these newcomers and to assisting them in whatever way she could best give help. Now at least one of her castles in the air had been built in vain.

"Perhaps we may like Miss Atkins after we know her better," she said, trying hard to keep the doubt she felt out of her voice.

Mrs. Elwood shook her head. "I hope she will improve on acquaintance, but I doubt it. It isn't my principle, my dear, to speak slightingly of any student in my house, but I am certain that this is not the last time I shall have to lay down the law of Wayne Hall to Miss Atkins."

At this plain speaking Grace flushed but said nothing. She understood that Mrs. Elwood's words had been spoken in confidence.

"I'm so glad to see you again, Mrs. Elwood," she smiled, bent on changing the subject.

"And I to see you, my dear," was the hearty response. "I have missed my Oakdale girls this summer."

After a few moments' conversation Grace said good night and went slowly upstairs. In spite of her satisfaction at being back at Overton she could not repress a sigh of regret over the recent unpleasantness.

"The unforeseen always happens," she reflected, pausing for a moment on the top step. "I hope the Anarchist will 'stay put' this time." She laughed softly at the idea of the Anarchist standing stiff and stationary in her new room. Then the ridiculous side of the encounter dawning on her, she sat down on the stairs and gave way to sudden silent laughter.

"What did Mrs. Elwood say?" asked Anne as Grace entered the room.

"I am afraid Mrs. Elwood is not, and never will be, an admirer of the Anarchist," said Grace. "Seriously speaking, she is half inclined to ask her to leave Wayne Hall. She believes she will have further trouble with her. Perhaps we should have waited. We might have tried, later, to gain possession of our room," added Grace doubtfully.

Anne shook her head. "We would be waiting still, if we had attempted to settle matters without Mrs. Elwood."

"But it seems too bad to begin one's sophomore year so unpleasantly. All summer I had been planning how helpful I would try to be to

entering freshmen, and this is the way my splendid visions have materialized." Grace eyed Anne rather dejectedly.

"Never mind," soothed Anne. "By to-morrow this little unpleasantness will have completely blown over. Perhaps the Anarchist," Anne smiled over the title Elfreda had bestowed upon the disturbing freshman, "will discover that she can make friends more quickly by being pleasant. She may reform over night. Stranger things have happened."

"But nothing of that sort will happen in her case," declared Grace. "You said just a moment ago if it hadn't been for Mrs. Elwood we would still be out in the hall clamoring for a room, didn't you?"

"I did," smiled Anne.

"That was equivalent to accusing the Anarchist of stubbornness, wasn't it?"

"It was."

"Very well. If she is half as stubborn as I believe her to be, she won't be different to-night, to-morrow or for a long time afterward."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BELATED FRESHMAN

"THE first thing I shall do this morning after breakfast is to unpack," announced Grace Harlowe with decision, as she gave her hair a last pat preparatory to going downstairs to breakfast. "Last year I was so excited over what studies I intended to take and meeting new girls that I unpacked by fits and starts. It was weeks before I knew where to find things. But I've reformed, now. I'm going to put every last article in place before I set foot outside Wayne Hall. Do you wish the chiffonier or the bureau this year, Anne, for your things?"

"The chiffonier, I think," replied Anne, after due reflection. "I haven't as much to stow away as you have. It will do nicely for me."

"There goes the breakfast bell!" exclaimed Grace. "Come along, Anne, I'm hungry. Besides, I'd like the same seat at the table that I had last year."

Outside their door they were joined by Miriam and Elfreda, and the four friends stopped to talk before going downstairs.

"Were you haunted by nightmares in which

glowering Anarchists pranced about?" asked Miriam, her eyes twinkling.

"No," replied Grace. "I slept too soundly even to dream."

"I dreamed that I went into the registrar's office to get my chapel card," began Elfreda impressively. "When she handed it to me it was three times larger than the others. On it in big red letters was printed, 'The Anarchist, Her Card.' I thought I handed it back to her and tried to explain that I wasn't an anarchist because I had neither bushy eyebrows nor a scowl. She just sat and glared at me, saying over and over, 'Look in your mirror, look in your mirror,' until I grew so angry I threw the card at her. It hit her and she fell backward. That frightened me, although it seemed so strange that a little, light piece of pasteboard could strike with such force. I tried to lift her, but she grew heavier and heavier. Then—"

"Yes, 'then,' " interposed Miriam, "I awoke in time to save myself from landing on the floor with a thump. Elfreda mistook me for the registrar. She was walking in her sleep."

"Of course I didn't mean to," apologized Elfreda. "You know that, don't you, Miriam? I can't help walking in my sleep. I've done it ever since I was a little girl."

"I forgive you, but you must promise not to

dream," laughed Miriam. "Otherwise I am likely to find myself out the window or being dropped gently downstairs while you dream gaily on, regardless of what happens to your long-suffering roommate."

As they entered the dining room several girls already seated at the table welcomed them with joyful salutations. It was at least ten minutes before any one settled down to breakfast. Grace observed with secret relief that Miss Atkins was not at the table. The three freshmen who were to fill the last available places in Wayne Hall had not yet arrived. During breakfast a ceaseless stream of merry chatter flowed on. Everyone wished to tell her neighbor about her vacation, of what she intended to take during the fall term, or of how impossible it was to get hold of her trunk. Then there was the usual amount of wondering as to why the four freshmen hadn't appeared.

"One of them is here—that is, she's in the house," remarked Elfreda laconically.

"She is!" exclaimed Emma Dean, opening her eyes. "I didn't see her yesterday."

"You were consoling your homesick cousin, so how could you know what went on here?" reminded Grace. It had been decided that nothing should be said regarding the events of the previous day.

"So I was," said Emma. "She made me think of Longfellow's 'Rainy Day.' She looked so 'dark and dreary.'"

"What a unique comparison," chirped a wide-awake sophomore. "That will be so appropriate for the freshman grind book."

"It is our turn this year," exulted Elfreda. "I shall be on the lookout for good material, too. I know one freshman who will be a candidate for honors."

"Who?" inquired Emma Dean curiously.

Grace looked appealingly at the stout girl. A slight shake of the head reassured her. Elfreda abandoned her intention of mentioning names, and parried Emma's question so cleverly that the latter became interested in something else and forgot that she had asked it.

The instant she had finished her breakfast, Grace reannounced her intention of unpacking her trunk and rose to leave the table. Anne followed her, a curious smile on her face. The majority of the girls rose from the table at the same time, or immediately after, and went their various ways.

"Now," declared Grace energetically, "I am going to begin my labor."

"What did you say you were going to do?" asked Anne innocently.

"Unpack my trunk. I—why—I—haven't any

trunk to unpack!" exclaimed Grace in bewilder ment. Then catching sight of Anne's mirthful face, she sprang forward, caught Anne by the shoulders and shook her playfully. "Anne Pierson, you bad child, you heard me make all my plans for unpacking, yet you wouldn't remind me that my trunk was still at the station."

"I couldn't resist keeping still and allowing you to plan," confessed Anne. "What a joke that would be for the grind book!"

"Yes, wouldn't it though?" agreed Grace sarcastically. "However, we are not freshmen, and as my roommate I strictly forbid you to publish my stupidity broadcast. Having the unpacking fever in my veins, I shall console myself with unpacking my bag and suit case. I'll keep on wishing for my trunk and perhaps it will come." Grace walked to the window. She leaned out, peering anxiously down the road. Then, with a cry of delight, she exclaimed: "Come here, Anne."

Anne walked obediently to the window.

"'Tell me, Sister Anne, do you see anything?'" quoted Grace.

"You are saved, Fatima," returned Anne dramatically. "It is an express wagon."

Grace darted out of her door and down the stairs, meeting the expressman on the veranda, her trunk on his shoulder. Anne, having noti-

fied Elfreda and Miriam that the trunks had arrived, went downstairs to look after hers.

"Now I can carry out my plan, after all," declared Grace, with great satisfaction. "'He who laughs last, laughs best,' you know," she added slyly.

"Before unpacking, first find your trunk," retorted Anne.

"Thank goodness, we don't have to think about entrance examinations this year," said Grace, as she knelt before her trunk, fitting the key to the lock.

"Yes, it does make considerable difference," returned Anne. "We shall have more time to ourselves. Besides, we won't have to worry our heads off the first week about whether we survived or perished."

The sound of an automobile horn caused Grace to run to the window. "It's the bus!" she cried. "Three strange girls are getting out of it. Evidently our freshmen have arrived. That tall girl looks interesting. One of them is as stout as Elfreda. The little girl is cunning. I think I like her the best of the three. Oh dear!" she exclaimed ruefully, hastily drawing back from the window, "she looked straight up and saw me standing here. What will she think of me?"

"You shouldn't be so curious," teased Anne.

"I know it," admitted Grace. "I'm not over curious as a rule. I hope the tall girl is to room with the Anarchist. She looks capable of keeping her in order."

"That task will, no doubt, be handed over to you," said Anne, who had been making rapid progress in unpacking, while Grace had been occupied in looking over the newcomers. "You'd better get your unpacking done, so that you'll be ready for it—the task, I mean."

Grace sat down before her trunk with a little impatient sigh. For the space of an hour the two girls worked rapidly, almost in silence. Both trunks had been emptied and the greater part of their contents stored away when the sound of an angry, protesting voice outside the door caused them to look at each other wonderingly.

"What can have happened?" asked Anne.

Even as Anne spoke a never-to-be-forgotten voice said impressively, "What you prefer is immaterial to me, I prefer to room alone." The emphatic closing of a door followed. There was a sound of hurrying footsteps on the stairs, then all was still.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ANARCHIST CHOOSES HER ROOMMATE

"IT'S the Anarchist, of course," said Anne, turning to Grace.

"I wonder who she left roomless in the hall this time," speculated Grace. "Shall we go and see?"

"Do you think we had better?" hesitated Anne.

"Yes," returned Grace boldly. "To a certain extent we are responsible for the welfare of the freshmen." Opening the door, she looked up and down the hall. Then, with a sudden air of resolution, she walked downstairs. On the oak seat in the hall, looking disconsolately about her, sat the "cunning" freshman that Grace had admired. At sight of Grace she sprang toward the sophomore with an eager, "Won't you please tell me where I can find Mrs. Elwood?"

"I believe she has gone to market," replied Grace. "She usually goes at this time every morning. Can I help you in any way?"

"No-o," replied the other girl doubtfully. "I wished to see Mrs. Elwood, because—" Her lip quivered. A big tear rolled down her cheek. "Oh, I hate college," she muttered in a choking

voice. "I wish I hadn't come here. I'd go back to the station and take the next train west, if I hadn't promised my brother that I'd stay. I hate the east and everything in it. I know I'm going to be unhappy here."

With the smile that few people could resist, Grace sat down on the seat beside the tearful little stranger. "I think I know what is troubling you," she said gently. "I could not help overhearing Miss Atkins a few moments ago. I also heard you running downstairs, so I came down, too, to ask you if there was anything I could do for you."

"You are very kind," faltered the stranger. "I must wait to see Mrs. Elwood, but will you tell me your name, please?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon for not introducing myself," responded Grace contritely. "I am Grace Harlowe of the sophomore class."

"My name is Mildred Taylor," responded the newcomer. "I came from the station in the bus a few minutes ago. There were two other freshmen with me. They seem to be more fortunate than I. The maid showed us to our rooms. I supposed, of course, that I would have to room with another girl, but I didn't think—" she paused.

"I know," sympathized Grace. "I heard what was said to you; at least a part of it. Won't

you come upstairs to our room and meet my roommate, Miss Pierson?"

"It is very thoughtful in you to take so much trouble for me," replied the freshman gratefully.

"That is part of our plan here at Overton," laughed Grace. "When I was a lonely, bewildered freshman, several of the upper class girls made it their business to look out for my comfort. Now it is my turn to pass that kindness along."

"What a nice way to look at things!" exclaimed Mildred Taylor. "If I thought the rest of the girls in the college were going to be like you, I'd be ready to love Overton."

"Oh, you will love Overton," was Grace's quick reply. "You can't help yourself."

Anne received the forlorn newcomer with a sweet courtesy that quite charmed her. "We are in the midst of our unpacking," she explained. "Our trunks came only a little while ago. Won't you take off your hat and coat?"

"Anne, I will leave Miss Taylor in your care," declared Grace. "Please excuse me, I'll be back directly," she nodded encouragingly to their guest.

At the door of Miriam's room Grace knocked softly, then in answer to the impatient, "Come in," entered to find Elfreda standing in the

midst of an extended circle formed by her possessions.

"Isn't this enough to discourage the most valiant heart?" she declared, with a comprehensive sweep of her arm over the scattered contents of her trunk. "But I am going to clear everything away. I promised Miriam that my half of the room should be kept 'decently and in order' all year. It is one of my sophomore obligations."

Grace listened in amusement to the stout girl's earnest assertion. "I haven't finished unpacking either," she said. "I came for advice. The freshman who was to occupy the other half of Miss Atkins's room has arrived, and Miss Atkins won't let her into the room. I just brought her upstairs to my room.

"Last night I talked with Mrs. Elwood. She isn't particularly anxious to have Miss Atkins in the house. When Miss Taylor, that is the name of the freshman who just came, tells her about what happened she will ask Miss Atkins to leave Wayne Hall. This girl has brought with her to Overton the worst possible spirit in which to begin her freshman year. Of course, we don't know whether she is rich or poor, or whether her success or failure in college means anything to any one besides herself. We can not know under what circumstances she has been

brought up. Perhaps she has some one at home who is straining every nerve to send her to college. Perhaps there is a father, mother, sister or brother who has made untold sacrifices to give her a college education. Perhaps there has been no lack of money, only a desire on the part of parents or a guardian to get rid of her by sending her off to school. I believe we ought to try to help this girl in spite of her rudeness to us. Will you go with me to her room? I want to talk to her. We may find her in a better humor than she was in last night. While Anne entertains Miss Taylor you and I will venture into the domain of the Anarchist."

"I'll go," agreed Elfreda, secretly flattered because Grace had chosen her.

Grace led the way down the hall to the end room. A sulky voice responded to her knock, and throwing open the door the two girls stepped inside. The belligerent freshman sat bolt upright in a Morris chair, forbidding and implacable.

"How do you do?" said Grace politely. "I hope we are not intruding."

The young woman merely scowled by way of answer.

"I wonder how I'd better begin," pondered Grace, looking squarely into the hostile eyes.

Elfreda stood calmly surveying the scowl-

ing girl. "You might ask us to sit down," she observed impertinently.

The young woman glanced at the stout girl with an expression of angry amazement. Elfreda's rudeness was equal to her own.

"I beg your pardon," she said satirically. "Won't you be seated?"

"Oh, no, I just wanted to hear you say it," flung back Elfreda.

Ignoring this retort, Miss Atkins turned to Grace. "What do you wish?" she asked with cold precision.

"I am sorry to be obliged to tell you that if you do not allow Miss Taylor to occupy her half of the room, you are likely to be asked to leave Wayne Hall," said Grace gravely. "Mrs. Elwood was displeased over what happened last night, and I know that when she learns of what has happened to-day she will not overlook it. We do not wish to see you leave Wayne Hall, and besides, the various college houses are filling fast. You might have difficulty in securing a desirable room elsewhere."

"Is there any reason why I should not occupy this room alone?"

"None whatever, if you arranged for a single beforehand," interposed Elfreda shrewdly. "If you did, I can't see why Mrs. Elwood consented to take Miss Taylor."

"I did not arrange for a single room," was the stiff response.

"Then you haven't any case, have you?" queried Elfreda cheerfully. "Now, see here. I am going to tell you a few things. You are beginning all wrong. It is just what I did last year, and I had a pretty disagreeable time, you may rest assured. The best thing you can do is to tell Miss Taylor to come and claim her half of the room before anything happens to you. If you leave Wayne Hall, sooner or later the whole college will hear of it and it won't help you to be popular, either. It is easy enough to do as you please regardless of whether or not it pleases others, but you are bound to pay for the privilege. If you don't believe me, just wait and see."

A flush mounted to the defiant stranger's cheeks.

"Public opinion is usually a matter of small importance to me," she said, but her tone of lofty indifference was not convincing. "There is, however, a certain amount of wisdom in what you have just said. I should not care to appear ridiculous in the eyes of the really important students at Overton. You may inform Miss Taylor that I have altered my decision. I shall raise no further objections to her as a roommate."

With a pompous gesture of dismissal this self-centered young woman rose and walked majestically to the window. Turning her back squarely upon Grace and Elfreda, she appeared to be deeply absorbed in watching what went on in the street, and, divided between vexation and laughter, the two girls left the room. Elfreda hurried back to her unpacking and Grace to her own room.

"It is all right, Miss Taylor. Your roommate is prepared to receive you," Grace announced.

"I shall be glad to have some place I can call all my own," sighed the little girl, "but I know I shall never like her," she added resentfully.

"On the contrary, you may learn to like her very much," returned Grace. "Now I'll help you with your things." Picking up Miss Taylor's heavy suit case, Grace escorted her to the door of the end room.

"How did it happen?" greeted Anne, when five minutes later Grace returned alone, smiling and triumphant.

"Don't ask me," laughed Grace. "Ask Elfreda. She wrought the miracle."

"What did she do?" asked Anne.

"She won the day, or rather the half of the room, by plain speaking." Grace recounted to Anne what had taken place in the belligerent young woman's room. "She made more im-

pression on the Anarchist in five minutes than I could have made in a week," finished Grace.

"Elfreda has a remarkable personality," was Anne's thoughtful answer. "Her very frankness makes an impression where diplomacy counts for little. However, I am not surprised that history repeated itself so soon. I hope this is the last time we shall be obliged to thwart the Anarchist and administer justice to the oppressed.

"I don't envy Miss Taylor," said Anne. "I wish every girl in college had as nice a roommate as I have."

"Beware of flatterers," laughed Grace.

"And also of Anarchists," added Anne.

"But of the two," smiled Grace, "I prefer flatterers, especially if they happen to occupy the other half of my room."

## CHAPTER VI

### ELFREDA MAKES A RASH PROMISE

"HOW does it feel to be a senior, Mabel?" questioned Miriam Nesbit, glancing smilingly over where Mabel Ashe, gowned smartly in white, her brown eyes dancing with interest in what went on about her, sat eating her dessert, and obligingly trying to answer half a dozen questions at once.

The seven other girls at the table looked expectantly at the pretty senior, who was their hostess at a dinner given by her at Martell's that Saturday evening.

"Oh, just the same as it did last year," she replied lightly. "I feel vastly older and a shade more responsible. To tell you the truth, I hate to think about it. I don't know how I am ever going to get along without Overton. I think I shall have to disguise myself and come back next year as a freshman; then I could do the whole four years over again."

"The question is, What are we going to do next year without you?" remarked Grace mournfully.

"Let us forget all about it," advised Mabel. "I refuse to have any weeps at my dinner. You

may shed your tears in private, but not here."

"What are you going to do when you finish college?" asked Miriam Nesbit.

"You girls will laugh when I tell you," replied Mabel solemnly, "but really and truly there is only one thing I care to do. I have warned Father that I intend to be self-supporting, but I haven't dared to tell him how I propose to earn my living."

"What are you going to do? Tell us, Mabel. We won't tell."

"Frances knows already. She thinks it would be fine, don't you, Frances?"

Frances nodded emphatically.

"I hope to become a newspaper woman," solemnly announced Mabel.

"A newspaper woman!" cried Constance Fuller. "Why, I think that would be dreadful!"

"I don't," stoutly averred Mabel. "I'd love to be a reporter and go poking into all sorts of places. After a while I'd be sent out to write up murder trials and political happenings and, oh, lots of big stories." Mabel beamed on her amazed audience.

"I never would have believed it of you, but I'm sure you could do it," predicted Leona Rowe confidently.

"Good for you!" cried Mabel, leaning across

the table to shake hands with Leona. "I have one loyal supporter at least."

Mabel's declaration having brought to the minds of the little company the fact that sooner or later the choice of an after-college occupation would be necessary, a brisk discussion began as to what each girl intended to do. Aside from Anne, who had fully determined to stick to her profession, and Constance, who was specializing in English, with the intention of one day returning to Overton as an instructor, no one at the table had a very definite idea of her future usefulness.

"We seem to be a rather purposeless lot," remarked Miriam Nesbit. "The trouble with most of us is that we are not obliged to think about earning our own living after we leave college. We look forward to being ornaments in our own particular social set, but nothing more. I'm not sure, yet, what I am going to do with my education. I intend to put it to some practical use, though."

"So am I," agreed Grace. "We'll just have to keep on doing our best and find ourselves."

"I suppose that is the real purpose of going to college," said Anne thoughtfully.

"I think we are all growing too serious," laughed Mabel. "By the way, Grace," she went on, "who is that curious looking little fresh-

man with the perpetual scowl that lives at Wayne Hall?"

The four Wayne Hall girls exchanged significant glances.

"Stop exchanging eye messages and tell me," ordered Mabel.

"Her name is Atkins," returned Grace briefly. Then a peculiar look in her eyes caused Mabel to say hastily, "I just wondered who she was," and changed the subject.

As they left Martell's, walking two by two, Mabel fell into step with Grace. Slipping her arm through that of the Oakdale girl, she said in a low tone, "Come over to see me to-morrow evening. I have something to say to you. I almost said it before the girls; then I caught your warning look in time. Come to dinner to-morrow night and stay all evening. I promise faithfully to make you study."

"I have a theme to do," replied Grace dubiously. "Do you think there would be any prospect of my getting it done?"

"Oceans of it," assured Mabel glibly. "I'll be as still as a mouse while you do it. If you need a subject perhaps I can furnish the inspiration. As long as I intend to become a newspaper woman I might as well begin to sprout a few ideas."

"All right, I'll come," laughed Grace. "Did

I tell you I was taking chemistry this year? I find it very absorbing."

"I liked it, too," agreed Mabel. "I am more interested in psychology, though I like my essay and short story work best of all. I'm going in for interpretative reading, too. All that sort of thing will help me in my work when I leave here."

"I wish I knew what I wanted to do," sighed Grace. "I'd love to begin to plan about it now."

"It will dawn upon you suddenly some day," prophesied Mabel, "and you will wonder why you never thought of it before."

The diners strolled along together as far as the campus. There, Constance Fuller, Mabel, Frances and Helen Burton left the quartette from Wayne Hall.

"It's early yet," said Elfreda, consulting her watch.

"What time is it, Elfreda?" asked Grace.

"Half-past eight," answered the stout girl. "We have plenty of time to study. I, for one, need it. My subjects are all frightfully hard. I tried to pick out easy ones, but did you ever notice that the schedule is so arranged that you can't possibly pick out two easy subjects and recite them both in the same term? One always conflicts with the other."

"Long experience, crafty faculty," laughed

Miriam. "They know our weaknesses and how to deal with them."

"The last time we were out to dinner in a body we talked about the past. This time it was the future," remarked Elfreda. "That reminds me, what has become of Arline and Ruth? I haven't seen either of them this week except at a distance."

"Arline and Ruth haven't been on friendly terms since the night of Arline's dinner at Vinton's," Grace remarked soberly. "It isn't Ruth's fault. She is heartbroken over the estrangement. This is the first difference she and Arline have ever had."

"Such a ridiculous thing to quarrel over," sniffed Elfreda. "I could see that night that Arline was cross because Ruth didn't want to talk about herself."

"I hope they will be friends again before the reception," said Grace. "It would be awkward for all of us if they are not."

"Oh, dear," sighed Anne, sitting down on the top step of the veranda. "I'm too lazy to look at my books to-night." The four girls had reached Wayne Hall and the beauty of the autumn night made them reluctant to go into the house, where an evening of hard study awaited them. "I'd like to stay out here for hours and look at the stars."

"And have stiff neck and a cold of the fond, clinging type, tomorrow," jeered Elfreda.

"How disgustingly practical you are, Elfreda!" exclaimed Miriam.

"I'm only warning her," persisted Elfreda.

"It doesn't seem as though we'd been back at Overton for three weeks, does it?" asked Grace.

"It seems longer than that to me," said Miriam Nesbit. "The freshman dance happened ages ago, according to my reckoning, and nothing, absolutely nothing, has happened since."

"Never mind, it won't be long until the sophomore reception," comforted Grace. "I never suspected that you had such a rabid craving for excitement, Miriam."

"The freshman dance was a tame affair," averred Miriam. "I think our class was more interesting in its infancy than is this year's class."

"I think so, too," agreed Grace. "Still, we don't know what genius lies hidden in the bosoms of 19—'s freshmen."

"This year we shall be the hostesses," exulted Elfreda. "Who are you girls going to invite?"

"I'll ask Miss Taylor," volunteered Anne.

"I'll ask Miss Wilton," said Miriam.

"That's two from Wayne Hall," counted Anne. "There are two freshmen left."

"One of us could invite that nice tall girl, Miss Evans," planned Grace. "That leaves only one girl uninvited." She hesitated. Her three friends read the meaning of the hesitation. Elfreda sprang loyally into the breach.

"I'll ask Miss Atkins," she declared stoutly. "You notice, don't you, that I am not addressing her by her pet name? I'll conduct her to the reception and back, if she'll accept my manly arm, and buy her flowers into the bargain. So go ahead and invite Miss Evans, Grace."

"J. Elfreda Briggs, you can never manage that Miss Atkins," protested Miriam. "In the first place, she won't accept you as an escort, and if she should happen to do so, it will be a sorry evening for you."

"I'll take the risk," replied Elfreda confidently. "I managed her once before, didn't I? You girls go ahead and invite the others. Leave Miss Atkins to me. I'll escort her in triumph to the reception, or perish gallantly in the attempt."

"Do you really believe she will accept your invitation, Elfreda?" asked Grace doubtfully.

"I can tell you better after I have asked her," was Elfreda's flippant retort. "I have an idea that she will feel dreadfully hurt if no one asks her to go."

"Hurt!" exclaimed three voices in unison.

"Yes, hurt," repeated Elfreda. "The Anarchist isn't half so savage as she pretends to be. That blood-thirsty manner of hers isn't real. She puts it on to hide something else."

"But what is it she wishes to hide?" asked Miriam. "Your deductions are quite beyond us."

"If I knew I'd tell you. I don't pretend to understand her, but I can see that she isn't as fierce as she seems. Time and I will solve the riddle, and when we do you'll be the first to hear of it."

## CHAPTER VII

### GIRLS AND THEIR IDEALS

DIRECTLY after her last class the next day, Grace hurried to her room to change her gown. She looked forward with eager pleasure to her evening with Mabel Ashe. She was deeply attached to the pretty senior, who was the best-liked girl in college, and Grace could not help feeling a trifle proud of Mabel's frank enjoyment of her society. Anne, knowing Grace was to be away, had accepted an invitation to go down to Ruth Denton's little room, help her cook supper, and spend the evening with her.

"Oh, dear," sighed Grace, as she tried vainly to reach the two hooks of her dark blue charmeuse gown that seemed only a sixteenth of an inch out of reach, "I wish Anne were here. I can touch these two hooks with the ends of my fingers but I can't fasten them. I'll have to ask Mabel to hook me up when I get to Holland House." Giving up in disgust, Grace slipped into her long, blue serge coat, carefully adjusted her new fall hat that she had just received from home, and catching up her gloves ran downstairs.

Mabel Ashe's graceful, welcoming figure leaning over the baluster waiting for her was the first thing that attracted her attention as she stepped inside the hall at Holland House.

"Come right up," invited Mabel. "We'll have a little while together before dinner. Did you bring your notebook?"

"Yes," replied Grace. "Remember, you are to help me choose a subject for my theme. You volunteered, you know."

"Not until after dinner, though, if you don't mind. Sit down here and be comfy. This is my pet chair, but I insist on letting you have it because you are company." She gently pushed Grace into a roomy leather-covered armchair. Seating herself opposite Grace, Mabel fixed her brown eyes almost gravely on her. "Now, Grace," she said earnestly, "please tell me about this Miss Atkins of Wayne Hall."

"There isn't much to tell," replied Grace. "Did you ever see her?"

"Once."

"We had a little trouble with her our very first day back," continued Grace. "She took possession of our room and refused to give it up. Then when Mrs. Elwood came to our rescue, she went to the room that had been assigned to her like a lamb. She felt anything but lamblike toward me, you may believe, and when later

Mrs. Elwood brought up her new roommate, she refused to allow her to enter."

"Refused to allow her to enter," repeated Mabel wonderingly. "What sort of girl is she, Grace?"

"I don't know," answered Grace doubtfully. "She is an enigma. She speaks the most precise English, with absolutely no trace of slang. But she looks as though the whole world were her natural enemy. Elfreda named her the Anarchist. I am rather ashamed to say we call her that behind her back."

Mabel smiled slightly, then asked, "What did the girl do—the one she wouldn't room with, I mean?"

"She went downstairs to wait for Mrs. Elwood. The reason I know all about it is because I happened to hear her tell Miss Taylor, that's the freshman's name, that she would have to go elsewhere. I knew Mrs. Elwood was out, so I went down to see if there were anything I could do for her, and she told me all about it. I knew Mrs. Elwood would be out of patience with Miss Atkins and ask her to leave Wayne Hall." Grace paused.

"What happened next?" asked Mabel interestedly.

"I told Miss Taylor I would try to fix things for her. I went upstairs and plotted with El-

freda. Then she and I bearded the dragon in her den. After I had finished telling her that it would be better to take little Miss Taylor without further bickering, Elfreda rose to the occasion and gave her a much-needed lecture. She is very shrewd, I think. She evidently realized she had gone too far. She objected to Miss Taylor because it is her nature to object to everything. When she saw that we had taken up the cudgels in Miss Taylor's behalf, and that she was likely to get into hot water, she decided to accept her as a roommate without further opposition. That's the whole story."

"She must be eccentric and very disagreeable," commented Mabel. "What made you go to such pains to save her from the wrath of Mrs. Elwood?"

"I suppose I felt sorry for her," confessed Grace. "She is beginning her freshman year in the worst possible spirit. But as I said to the girls not long ago, we do not know what lies back of her disagreeable manner. Why are you so interested in hearing about her, Mabel?"

"She is making herself the subject of considerable censure among the juniors and seniors by snubbing the girls of her own class and calmly announcing that she wishes to make only powerful and influential friends in college," returned Mabel. "You know, of course, the atti-

tude of the old students toward freshmen. This Miss Atkins is either laboring under the impression that she is an exception to tradition, or else she has no sense of the fitness of things. At first, I am sorry to say, a few of the seniors looked upon her as a joke, but the reaction has set in, and, like Humpty Dumpty, she is going to take a great fall. When she does, all the king's horses and all the king's men won't be of any assistance to her in getting her back from where she tumbled. I don't believe she realizes that she is making herself ridiculous.

"I was at Vinton's last Saturday afternoon. Jessie Meredith invited another senior and me to luncheon there. Imagine our surprise when a prim, precise little figure marched up to our table and seated herself as calmly as though she were the president of the senior class. There is room for four at those tables, you know, and we had not reserved ours. Still, there were plenty of other tables at which she might have seated herself. It was rather embarrassing for all of us, but it was worse when she tried to break into the conversation. She insisted on expounding her views on whatever we discussed. We were compelled to cut short our luncheon and flee to Martell's for our dessert. We escaped at the moment the waitress was serving her luncheon, so she couldn't very well rise and pursue us. If

I had been alone, I might have stayed, but Jessie was disgusted, and I was Jessie's guest."

Grace had listened to Mabel's recital with troubled eyes. "I never before knew a girl quite like Miss Atkins," she said slowly. "What is it you wish me to do for her, Mabel?"

"Wise young sophomore," laughed Mabel. "How did you guess it?"

"You are not given to footless gossip," replied Grace quietly. "Besides, I live at Wayne Hall."

"Cleverer and cleverer," commented the senior, in mock admiration. "This is my idea. I had hoped that, being in the same house with her, you might be able to guide her gently along the beaten trail made by girls like you. However, after what you have told me, I am afraid you are not the one to do it."

"I haven't a particle of influence with her," said Grace soberly. "You must know that from what I have already told you."

"Yes, I do know it," answered Mabel. "Is there any one at Wayne Hall who would be likely to have the right kind of influence?"

"No-o-o." Grace shook her head doubtfully. Then she suddenly brightened. "There is one person who might help her. Elfreda is going to invite her to the sophomore reception. She doesn't wish to do it, I know, although she hasn't

said so. Please don't think me conceited, but Elfreda would do anything for me. She fancies herself under obligation to me on account of what happened last year," Grace added in an embarrassed tone.

"Grace Harlowe!" exclaimed Mabel delightedly, "I believe we have solved our problem. J. Elfreda is the very one to make Miss Atkins wake up to what is expected from her at Overton. Will you talk with her about it, and ask her if she is willing to try?"

"I'll tell her tonight," promised Grace. "I'm sure she'll try. She is not afraid to tackle Miss Atkins, either, or she wouldn't have invited her to the reception."

"Then that's settled for the time being at least," declared Mabel jubilantly. "Just in time for dinner, too. There goes the bell."

After dinner more conversation followed. It was eight o'clock before Grace remembered her theme. "What shall I write about?" she demanded. "You promised to supply the inspiration."

"So I will," returned Mabel cheerfully. "Why don't you write about—" She paused, frowning slightly. "After all my vaunted promises I'm not able to suggest anything on the spur of the moment," she confessed laughingly. "Why don't you take some incident in your own

life or that of your friends and write a story about it?" she proposed after a moment's silence.

"I don't believe I could ever write a story," confessed Grace. "I think I'll write a little discussion about girls and their ideals."

"That sounds interesting," commended Mabel. "Go ahead with it. You may sit at this table, if you like."

Grace seated herself, nibbled at the end of her fountain pen reflectively, then began to write. Mabel busied herself with her own work. At last Grace shoved aside the closely written sheets of paper. "It's done," she cried, in a triumphant voice. "Now we can talk."

"May I read it?" asked Mabel.

"Of course, if you wish to," laughed Grace. "It isn't worth the trouble, though."

Mabel picked up the theme and began to read. Grace rose, and strolling over to the bookcase fell to examining the various bindings. Her friend's flattering comment, "It's splendid, Grace. I had no idea you could write so well," caused her to look up in surprise from the book she held in her hand.

"I don't think it is very remarkable," she contradicted. "It hasn't a shred of literary style.

"It's convincing," argued Mabel.

"That is because I felt strongly on my subject. When it comes to anything that lies near my heart I am always convincing. Father says I put up the most convincing argument of any one he knows," smiled Grace. "He always declares he is wax in my hands. I hope you will make me a visit and meet my father and mother, Mabel," she added.

"I surely will," promised Mabel. "We must correspond after I leave college. I wish you could go home with me for one of the holiday vacations. Can't you manage it?"

"I am afraid not this year," returned Grace doubtfully. "Father and Mother wouldn't object, but they miss me so during the year that I feel as though my holidays belonged to them. I am an only child, you know."

"So am I," returned Mabel. "I am also extremely popular with my father. If I can tear myself away from him to make you a visit, surely you ought to be equally public spirited."

"I'll think it over," laughed Grace. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed a moment later, glancing at the little French clock on the chiffonier, "I must go. It is twenty minutes to ten. How the time has slipped away."

"Thank you," bowed Mabel. "Such appreciation of my society is gratifying in the extreme. I'll invite you again."

"See that you do," retorted Grace. "Have you any engagement for Saturday afternoon? If you haven't, then suppose we have luncheon at Vinton's; then go for a long walk. We can stay out all afternoon, stop at the tea shop for supper and come home on the street car, or walk in, if we choose. We might ask Frances and Anne to join us. Miriam and Elfreda are going out for a ride. Miriam has a horse here this year. She had her choice between a horse and a runabout and she took the horse. The moment Elfreda found out she had one, she wrote home about it. Now she has a riding horse, too."

"I had my own pet mount, Elixir, here during my freshman and sophomore years. The latter part of my second year I didn't take him out enough to exercise him. So I ordered him sent home. He is a beauty. Jet black with a three-cornered white spot in the middle of his forehead. He's an Arabian, and Father paid an extravagant price for him. He shakes hands and does ever so many tricks that I taught him. When you go home with me, you shall see him."

"I'd love to have a riding horse," confessed Grace, "but Father can't afford it. I've never asked him, but I know he can't. We have no car either."

"Make me a visit and you can ride Elixir every day," bribed Mabel.

"I'd love that!" exclaimed Grace fervently as she slipped into her coat and settled her hat firmly on her fluffy hair. "Good night, Mabel. Come and see me soon. Don't forget our Saturday walk."

"I'll go to the door with you," announced Mabel. "No, I won't forget our walk. I'll tell Frances about it to-morrow, before she has a chance to make any other plans. She is a popular young person, and elusive in the matter of dates."

"There are others," retorted Grace, with a significant glance at her friend.

"So there are," agreed Mabel innocently.

On the way home Grace wondered if there were any way in which she might help Laura Atkins. True to her promise, she went at once to interview Elfreda on the subject of the eccentric freshman. She found Miriam and the stout girl busily engaged in trying to put together a puzzle that Elfreda had unearthed in the toy department of one of the Overton stores that afternoon. Puzzles were the delight of Elfreda's heart. But, once put together, they immediately ceased to be of interest.

"This is a wonder!" she exclaimed at sight of Grace. "It is worth having. Neither Miriam nor I can put it together."

"I have a harder one for you to tackle,"

smiled Grace. Then she recounted her conversation with Mabel Ashe.

"You have altogether too much faith in my powers of persuasion," grumbled Elfreda, secretly pleased, nevertheless.

"But that is much better than if we had no faith at all," reminded Grace.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INVITATION

THE next morning Grace made a startling discovery. It was directly after breakfast that she made it. Having fifteen minutes to spare before going to her first recitation, she decided to reread her theme. What one wrote always read differently after one had slept over it. What seemed clever at night might be very commonplace when read in the cold light of the morning. Grace reached for the book in which she had placed her theme. It was not there. Going down on her knees, she looked first under the table, then under the chiffonier, then turned over the books on the table, then, darting to the closet, searched the pockets of her long coat.

"Where can it be?" she cried despairingly. "I am sure I had it when I came into the hall last night. I couldn't have lost it on my way across the campus. I'll run down and ask Anne. Perhaps she picked it up and put it away for me."

Grace hurried downstairs as fast as her feet would carry her. To her low inquiry in Anne's ear she received a disappointing answer. Anne,

who was just finishing her breakfast, replied that she had not even seen the theme. She rose at once to accompany Grace upstairs. The two girls searched in every nook and corner of the room. "I wanted to hand it in this morning," lamented Grace. "Now I'll have to write it all over again. I don't believe I can remember much of it, either. I'll have to explain to Miss Duncan, too, and ask her to give me until to-morrow to write it."

"Perhaps it will be found yet," comforted Anne.

"No danger of it, unless I lost it in the street. Then there's only one chance in a thousand of its turning up," declared Grace gloomily. "I don't see how I happened to be so careless."

"When must it be handed in?" questioned Anne.

"This morning," answered Grace dolefully. "I'll have to re-write it to-night and from memory, too."

"Why don't you choose another subject?" was Anne's advice.

"No." Grace shook her head positively. "I can do better with the old one. I'm not going to bother about asking if any one has found it. My name was on it. If I made a fuss over it some one might say it was only an excuse, that I

hadn't really lost it, but just wished to gain time. I hope Miss Duncan won't think that."

"No one in this house would say so," contradicted Anne loyally.

"But suppose Alberta Wicks or Mary Hampton heard of it? They might circulate that rumor. I hate to seem so suspicious, but an ounce of prevention, you know. I will write it over and say nothing further about it." Having made up her mind on the subject Grace promptly dismissed it from her thoughts.

Miss Duncan did look rather suspiciously at Grace as she related her misfortune. Grace's gray eyes met hers so fairly and truthfully, however, that she was forced to believe the young woman's statement. She gave the desired respite rather ungraciously and Grace took her place in class, relieved to think she had got off so easily. That night she rewrote the theme. It did not give her as much trouble as she had anticipated. She laid down her fountain pen with alacrity when it was finished and carefully blotted the last sheet. "Now I can begin to think about the reception," she announced. "What are you going to wear, Anne?"

"My new pink gown," said Anne promptly. "As long as I was extravagant enough to indulge in a new evening dress I might as well wear it. The sophomore reception is really

the most important affair of the year, to us, at least."

"I'm delighted to have an opportunity to show off my pale blue chiffon frock," laughed Grace. "I've been in ecstasies over it ever since it was made. Have you seen that white gown of Elfreda's? It's perfectly stunning. I stopped in her room for a minute last night. She was trying it on. It's the prettiest gown she's had since she came here. Ask her to show it to you."

"I'm going over there now," said Anne. "I'll be back in a minute." It was precisely four minutes later when Anne poked her head in Grace's door. "Come on into Miriam's room, Grace," she called. "She has just made chocolate. She has some lovely little cakes and sandwiches, too. And Elfreda has something to tell us."

Grace rose from her chair, lay down the notebook she had been running through, and hastily followed Anne.

"Have a cushion," laughed Miriam hospitably, throwing a fat sofa pillow at Grace, who caught it dextrously, patted it into shape and, placing it on the floor, sat down on it Turk fashion. Elfreda poured another cup of chocolate, then seated herself on the floor beside Grace. "Pass Grace the sandwiches, Anne," she ordered. "We made these ourselves. We bought

the stuff at that new delicatessen place on High Street."

"They are delicious," commented Grace, between bites. "I'm hungry to-night. I didn't like the dinner very well."

"Neither did we," responded Miriam. "After dinner we went out for a walk to see what we could find, and we brought back what you see spread before you."

"I shall pay a visit to the delicatessen shop," announced Grace. "To-morrow night you must come to my room for a spread."

"I'll come to your room with pleasure," retorted Elfreda, "but not to eat. One spread a week is my limit. Now for my news. The Anarchist has accepted my invitation to the reception."

"Really!" exclaimed Grace. "Do tell us about it, Elfreda."

"I delivered my invitation after dinner to-night," began Elfreda. "I waited and waited, thinking some one else might invite her. I am not yearning for the honor, you know. I went to her door and knocked. Her roommate, Miss Taylor, opened it. The Anarchist sat over in one corner of the room, studying like mad. By the way, I understand she is a dig and stands high in her classes."

"Is she?" asked Anne, opening her eyes.

"Then that is one thing she has in her favor. Perhaps we shall discover other good qualities in her that we've overlooked."

"Perhaps," echoed Miriam dryly.

"Mustn't interrupt me," drawled Elfreda. "I may become peevish and refuse to talk."

"All right," smiled Grace. "We accept the warning. Continue, my dear Miss Briggs."

Elfreda grinned cheerfully. "I inquired with deferential politeness if Miss Atkins were busy. Then the Anarchist looked up from her book, glared like a lion, straightened her eyebrows and said in that awful voice she owns, 'Did you wish to speak to me?' "

Elfreda unconsciously imitated the belligerent freshman. Her audience giggled appreciatively.

"I replied in my most impressive English that I did wish to do that very thing," continued Elfreda. "Then I inquired tactfully if I was too late with my invitation to the sophomore dance. Without giving her time to answer I put in my aplication for the position of escort. Then"—Elfreda paused, a slight flush rose to her round face, "then she looked me in the eye and told me a deliberate untruth. She said she had refused one invitation because she had not been interested in the reception, but that she had changed her mind. She thanked me and

said she would be pleased to go. I bowed myself out without further ado, but Miss Taylor gave me the queerest look as I went. Her face was as red as fire. It was she who told me that the Anarchist had not been invited. She was afraid I might think she hadn't told the truth, but I knew better. Now, don't ever tell any one what I have said."

"I'm sorry she didn't tell the truth," said Grace disapprovingly. "Why couldn't she say that she had not been invited?"

"False pride," commented Miriam. "She evidently isn't so indifferent to the opinion of others as she would have us believe."

"She is a strange girl," mused Anne. "Perhaps she is not altogether to blame for her odd ways."

" 'Odd' is a good name for them," jeered Elfreda. "I wouldn't call it 'odd,' I'd use a stronger word than that. It's contemptible. I'm sorry I asked her to go to the reception."

"Then recall your invitation and tell her your reason for doing so," advised Miriam Nesbit bluntly. "Don't take her to the reception in that spirit. You will make yourself and her equally unhappy."

"Hear the sage lay down the law," retorted Elfreda impudently. "She's right, though, only I won't withdraw my invitation at this late date.

I'll try to give the Anarchist the most exciting time of her young life, but if she balks please don't blame me. You can lead an Anarchist to a reception, you know, but you can't make her dance unless she happens to feel like dancing. Still, I am going to do my best, and no sophomore can do more."

"That sounds like the Elfreda Briggs I heard talking last night," said Grace, smiling her approval of the stout girl's words.

"So it does," agreed Elfreda. "Hereafter I'll try to be more consistent. As for the Anarchist, she shall reap the benefit of my vow. I hope she knows how to dance. If she doesn't I shall have to constitute myself a committee of one to furnish amusement for her. If on the fatal night you see me, my arm firmly linked in that of her majesty, parading solemnly about the gymnasium with a fixed smile, and an air of gayety that I am a long way from feeling, don't you dare to laugh at me."

"We won't laugh at you, then, even though we can't help laughing at you now," said Grace. "We shall be only too glad to do anything we can to help you entertain her."

"I know that. Maybe you can help and maybe you can't. But if she doesn't enjoy herself it won't be my fault."

## CHAPTER IX

### ANTICIPATIONS

THE day of the sophomore reception was a busy one for the members of the sophomore class. To them, it was the event of the year, and the desire to make this dance outshine all its predecessors was paramount in almost every sophomore breast. Of course, there were the digs, who never thought of festivities, but spent all their time in study. No one counted on their help. The greater part of the class, however, was properly enthusiastic over the music, decorations, gowns and dance cards. Grace and Miriam, who were on the decorating committee, had spent the greater part of their day in the gymnasium. Under the skilful direction of the committee the big room blossomed out in strange and gorgeous array. There were the masses of evergreen so convenient for hiding unsightly gymnasium apparatus, which made the gymnasium a veritable forest green. Strings of Japanese lanterns added to the effect, while the freshmen and sophomore colors impartially wound the gallery railing and were draped and festooned wherever there was the slightest chance for display.

The sophomores had put forth their best efforts in behalf of their freshman sisters. When it came to sofa cushions and draperies they had surrendered their most highly treasured possessions for the good of the cause.

"I think we may congratulate ourselves," commented Gertrude Wells as she stood beside Miriam Nesbit, surveying their almost completed task. "Look at my hands! I have scratched and bruised them handling those evergreens. My dress is a sight, too," she added, pointing first to the green stains that decorated her white linen gown, then significantly to a three-cornered tear near the bottom of the skirt. "I don't care. It will be out of style by next summer, at any rate."

"I'm not much better off," declared Miriam. "You can't be a working woman and keep up a bandbox appearance, you know."

"I should say not," laughed Arline Thayer, who had come up in time to hear Miriam's last remark.

"Does any one know the time?" asked Grace, standing back a little to view the effect of the bunting she had been winding about a post. "I can't see the gym. clock from here. It is so swathed in green boughs and decorations that its poor round face is almost hidden, and I'm really too tired to go close enough to find out."

"It's five minutes past four o'clock," informed Gertrude, glancing at the tiny watch pinned to her waist.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Arline Thayer, "I can't stay here another minute. I have a hundred things to do before to-night."

"Where's Ruth?" asked Grace. "I haven't seen either of you lately except at an aggravating distance."

Arline's baby face hardened. "I haven't seen Ruth for over two weeks," she said stiffly.

"You haven't!" exclaimed Grace, who, stooping to tie her shoe, had not noticed Arline's changed expression. As she straightened up her surprised gray eyes met Arline's defiant blue ones. Like a flash she remembered. "Then you don't know who she has invited to the reception?"

"No," responded Arline shortly. "I don't know anything about it."

Grace was about to say something further when, overtaken by sudden thought, she turned her face away to hide the smile that hovered about her lips. Meanwhile, Gertrude Wells had engaged Arline in conversation, and Ruth's name was not mentioned again.

"This is positively my last appearance this afternoon as a decorator," declared Emma Dean. "I'm going home to beautify myself for

the great moment when I shall stand in line with my sophomore sisters to greet the infant freshmen."

"I'm going home, too, but without bursting into language," drawled J. Elfreda Briggs. "I pounded my thumb with a hammer, scratched my nose on an obstinate hemlock bough, and lost a bran span new pair of scissors. I think it is high time to leave this place. I'm not on the reception committee, 'tis true, but I have weighty matters to consider and am on the verge of a perilous undertaking." She uttered the last words in an all too familiar undertone, shooting a mischievous glance at her friends which caused Grace, Anne and Miriam to laugh outright.

"What are you girls laughing at?" demanded Gertrude Wells.

"Elfreda is so funny," explained Grace enigmatically. Then, fearing to offend Gertrude, she said hastily, "What she said was extremely laughable to us, because she was imitating some one we know."

The knot of girls separated soon after, going their separate ways. Anne, Grace, Miriam, Elfreda and Emma Dean turned their faces toward Wayne Hall.

"I wonder if Ruth is going?" remarked Grace, who walked behind Anne. "I thought we'd see her this afternoon."

"I noticed how sharply Arline answered you," said Anne significantly.

"Poor Ruth, I haven't a minute to spare or I'd run down there. We must go to-morrow afternoon, Anne. We'll take Ruth to Vinton's for dinner and, oh, Anne! let's invite Arline and make them be friends!"

"Splendid!" admired Anne. "I'll take charge of Ruth and you can look out for Arline."

"If you don't hurry, you'll be ready for the reception some time to-morrow," called Elfreda derisively. The two quickened their steps. The three girls ahead looked back, then mischievously began running toward Wayne Hall.

"We can catch them, Anne," exulted Grace.

"You mean you can," laughed Anne. "Run ahead and surprise them."

Grace was off like the wind. Although the three girls ran well they were no match for the lithe, slender young woman who ran like a hunted deer. She soon passed her friends and running on to the hall sat down on the steps with no apparent traces of exhaustion to wait for them.

"Let me see, what track team did you say you belonged to?" quizzed Elfreda, with open admiration. "If I could run like that I'd be happy. Where did you learn to run?"

"Back in Oakdale, where I was the prize tom-

boy of the school," laughed Grace. "Have you seen to your flowers for your freshman? I ordered pink roses for Miss Evans. Anne chose violets for Miss Taylor, didn't you, Anne?"

"I ordered violets for Miss Wilton, too," said Miriam.

"I tried to get snap dragons," giggled Elfreda, "but it's rather late in the season for them. Instead, the Anarchist will flourish a nosegay of blood-red roses. I can't imagine her parading around the gym. bedecked with violets."

"Elfreda, you are anything but a chivalrous escort," commented Anne.

"I am at least sincere," returned Elfreda, with an affected simper. "I hope those flowers haven't loitered along the way. I must call on my fair lady and see if she has received hers. I'm beginning to feel excited. I'm going to eat my dinner post haste. I want to get dressed and practice my bow before the mirror ere I enter the sacred precincts of her majesty's boudoir. Then I shall sweep into her domicile, arrayed in all my glory. She will be so overcome at sight of me and my splendor that she will follow me down to the carriage like a lamb. I ask you, ladies, after seeing me in that new white silk gown of mine, what Anarchist could resist me?"

"Of whom did Elfreda remind you just then, Grace?" asked Miriam.

"Hippy," laughed Grace. She looked exactly like him."

"Never saw him," stated Elfreda laconically.

"But you gave a fine imitation of him just the same!" exclaimed Grace.

## CHAPTER X

### AN OFFENDED FRESHMAN

AT dinner that night excitement reigned. Every girl in the house was going to the reception. To dispose of one's dinner and hurry to one's room to begin the all important task of dressing was the order of procedure, and Mrs. Elwood's flock rose from the table almost in a body and made a concerted rush for the stairs.

"She got them," Elfreda informed the others as they stopped for a moment in the hall. "I went to the door to ask her. She even thanked me for them."

"Wonderful," smiled Miriam. "Come on now. Remember, time flies and that your new white frock is a dream."

An hour later Elfreda stood before the mirror viewing herself with great satisfaction. It certainly is some class," she declared. "There I go again. I haven't used slang for a week. But circumstances alter cases, you know. Just pretend you didn't hear it, will you? I think I'll wear my violets at my girdle. I don't look very stout in this rig, do I? You look like a princess, Miriam. You're a regular howling beauty in

that corn-colored frock. Where are my gloves and my cloak? Oh, here they are, just where I put them. Now, I must go for her highness. Br—r—'' Elfreda shivered, giggled, then gathering up her cloak and gloves switched out the door.

Miriam smiled to herself as she went about gathering up her own effects, then fastening the cluster of yellow rosebuds to the waist of her gown she hurried out into the hall in time to encounter Grace and Anne.

''We are fortunate in that our ladies live under the same roof with us,'' laughed Anne.

''It certainly saves carriage hire,'' returned Grace. ''Here comes Elfreda and Miss Atkins. What on earth is she wearing?''

''I think I'll go for my freshman,'' said Miriam, her voice quivering suspiciously.

By the time Elfreda and the Anarchist had reached the head of the stairs, the three girls had fled precipitately, unable to control their mirth. Elfreda's face was set in a solemn expression that defied laughter. As for the Anarchist herself, she might easily have posed as a statue of vengeance. Her eyebrows were drawn into a ferocious scowl. She walked down the stairs with the air of an Indian chief about to tomahawk a victim. Her white silk gown, which was well cut and in keeping with the occasion,

contrasted oddly with her threatening demeanor, which was enhanced by a feather hair ornament that stood up belligerently at one side of her head.

"If she wouldn't wear that feather thing she'd be all right," muttered Grace in Anne's ear. "She looks like Hiawatha. She has made up her mind to be nice with Elfreda. She's wearing her flowers. I wonder if I'd better ask her to dance to-night. Shall you ask her, Anne?"

"I think so," reflected Anne. "I can't lead very well, but perhaps she can."

"I don't believe I'll ask her," said Grace slowly. "Humiliating one's self needlessly is just as bad as having too much pride."

"Hurry," called Miriam, who was already on the stairs. "The carriages are here."

It was a ridiculously short drive to the gymnasium, but, a fine rain having set in, carriages for one's freshmen guests were a matter of necessity. Elfreda and her charge occupied seats in the same carriage with Anne and Mildred Taylor, who, in a gown of pink chiffon over pink silk, looked, according to Elfreda, "too sweet to live."

"How are you getting along with Miss Atkins?" asked Grace an hour later, running up and waylaying Elfreda, who was slowly making her way across the gymnasium toward the cor-

ner of the room where the big punch bowl of lemonade stood.

"Don't ask me!" returned Elfreda savagely. "I managed to fill her dance card and supposed everything was lovely. She dances fairly well. If she'd only keep quiet, smile and dance calmly along. But, no, she must talk!" Elfreda's round face settled into lines of disgust. "She says such outrageously personal things to her partners. I know of three different girls she has offended so far. What will become of her before the evening is over?" she inquired gloomily. "She told me I was too stout to dance well, but I didn't mind that. Stout or not, she will be lucky to have even me to dance with at the rate she's going. Let's drown our mortification in lemonade."

"Poor Elfreda," sympathized Grace. "I wish I could help you, but, honestly, I feel as though it would be hardly fair to myself to make further advances in that direction."

"Don't do it," advised Elfreda, quickly, handing Grace a cup of fruit lemonade. "I'll manage to steer her through this dance. But next time some one else may do the inviting. The two classes make a good showing, don't they?"

"Beautiful," commented Grace. "The gymnasium looks prettier than it did last year. That sounds conceited, doesn't it?"

"It's true, though," averred Elfreda stoutly. "Doesn't Miriam look stunning tonight? I think she is the handsomest dark girl I ever saw, don't you?"

"With one exception," smiled Grace.

"Show me the exception, then," challenged Elfreda.

"I will some fine day," promised Grace. "She's in Italy now."

"You mean the girl you speak of as Eleanor?" asked Elfreda curiously.

Grace nodded. "She is one of my dearest friends and belongs to our sorority at home. At one time she was my bitterest enemy," she continued reminiscently. "She was so self-willed and domineering that none of us could endure her. She entered the junior class in high school when Miriam, Anne and I did. For a year and a half she made life miserable for all of us, then something happened and she turned out gloriously. I'll tell you all about it some other time."

"Was she worse than the Anarchist?" asked Elfreda sceptically.

"There is no comparison," replied Grace promptly. "Still, the Anarchist may have possibilities of which we know nothing."

"I wish she would give a demonstration of them to-night then," muttered Elfreda. "I sup-

pose I'll have to get busy and look her up. It is dangerous to leave her to her own devices. She may have offended half the company by this time." Elfreda strolled off in search of her troublesome charge. Grace crossed the gymnasium, her keen eyes darting from the floor, where groups of daintily gowned girls stood exchanging gay badinage, and resting after the last waltz, to the chairs and divans placed at intervals against the walls that were for the most part unoccupied.

Everyone seemed to be dancing. Grace remembered with a start that she had seen nothing of Ruth Denton. She had waved to Arline across the room on entering the gymnasium, and had not caught a glimpse of her since. "I must find Ruth," she reflected, "and tell her about tomorrow. Perhaps Anne has told her. She promised she would." Espying Mildred Taylor, Grace remembered with sudden contrition that she had not asked the little freshman to dance. "I suppose she hasn't a single dance left," murmured Grace regretfully. "At any rate, I'll ask her now." Approaching Mildred she said in her frank, straightforward fashion, "I'm so sorry I overlooked you, Miss Taylor. I intended asking you to dance first of all."

The "cute" little freshman turned her head away from Grace's apologetic gray eyes. "It

doesn't matter," she answered in a queer, strained voice. "My card was full long ago."

"I hope you are not hurt or offended at my seeming neglect," insisted Grace anxiously.

"Not in the least," was the almost curt rejoinder. "I do not think I shall stay much longer. I have a headache."

"I'm so sorry," said Grace sympathetically. "Can I do anything for you?"

Mildred Taylor did not answer. Her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears. She brushed them angrily away, saying with a petulance entirely foreign to her, "Please don't trouble yourself about me."

"Very well," replied Grace, in proud surprise. "Shall I tell Miss Pierson that you are ill?"

"No," muttered Mildred.

Grace walked away, puzzled and self-accusing. "I hurt her feelings by not asking her to dance," was the thought that sprang instantly to her mind. Then she suddenly recollected that she had not yet found Ruth. A little later she discovered her in earnest conversation with Gertrude Wells at the extreme end of the room.

"Dance this with me, Ruth," called Grace, as she neared her friend. Ruth glanced at her card. "I have this one free," she said. A moment later they were gliding over the smooth

floor to the inspiriting strains of a popular two step. Long before the end of the dance they stopped to rest and talk. "I suppose we ought to devote ourselves strictly to the freshmen," said Grace. "They all appear to be dancing, though. Where have you been keeping yourself, Ruth?"

"I've been busy," replied Ruth evasively.

"Will you be too busy to have dinner with us at Vinton's to-morrow night?" persisted Grace.

"No—o—o," said Ruth slowly. "At what time?"

"Half-past six," returned Grace. "We'll meet you there. I must leave you now to look after Miss Evans. I brought her here to-night."

It was late when the notes of the last waltz sounded, and still later when the gay participants left the gymnasium in twos, threes and little crowds trooping down the broad stone steps to where they were to take their carriages. The rain was now falling heavily, and to walk even across the campus was out of the question. Every public automobile and carriage in Overton had been pressed into service, and many who had braved the fine rain early in the evening and walked were obliged to negotiate with the drivers for a return of their vehicles. The carriages to Wayne Hall carried six girls instead of four, and the merry conversation that was kept up

during the short drive showed plainly that the evening had been a success. Even the Anarchist indulged in an occasional stiff remark with a view toward being gracious. When Elfreda humorously bowed her to her door and wished her an elaborate good night, an actual gleam of fun appeared in her stormy eyes, and forgetting her dignity she replied almost cordially that she had enjoyed her evening.

"I am surprised to think she did after the way she made remarks about people," commented Elfreda to Miriam, who was busily engaged in unhooking the stout girl's gown and listening in amusement to Elfreda's recital. "She has as much tact as a guinea hen. You know how tactful they are?"

In the meantime Anne and Grace were discussing the night's festivity in their own room. Grace had slipped into a kimono and stood brushing her long hair before the mirror. Suddenly she paused, her brush suspended in the air. "Anne," she said so abruptly that Anne looked at her in surprise, "did you notice anything peculiar about Miss Taylor? You were her escort, you know."

"No," responded Anne, knitting her brows in an effort to remember. "I can't say that I noticed anything."

"Then I am right," decided Grace. "She is

angry with me because in some way I missed asking her to dance."

"She said nothing to me," was Anne's quick reply.

"She is offended, I know she is," said Grace. "I'm sorry, of course. I didn't pass her by intentionally. I didn't know she was so sensitive. I think I'll ask her to go to Vinton's for luncheon on Saturday."

But when Grace delivered her invitation at the breakfast table the next morning it was curtly refused. Mildred Taylor's attitude, if anything, was a shade more hostile than it had been the night before. From her manner, it was evident that the little freshman, whom Grace had hastened to befriend on that first doleful morning when she found her roomless and in tears on the big oak seat in the hall, had quite forgotten all she owed to the girl she now appeared to be trying to avoid.

Finding her efforts at friendliness repulsed, Grace proudly resolved to make no more overtures toward the sulking freshman. She had done everything in her power to make amends for what had been an unintentional oversight on her part, and her self respect demanded that she should allow the matter to drop. She decided that if, later on, Mildred showed a disposition to be friendly, she would meet her half way, but,

until that time came, she would take no notice of her or seek further to ascertain the cause of her grievance.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FINGER OF SUSPICION

THAT very morning as Grace was about to leave Miss Duncan's class room she heard her name called in severe tones. Turning quickly, she met the teacher's blue eyes fixed suspiciously upon her.

"Did you wish to speak to me, Miss Duncan?" Grace asked.

"Yes," answered Miss Duncan shortly. She continued to look steadily at Grace without speaking.

Grace waited courteously for the teacher's next words. She wondered a little why Miss Duncan had detained her.

"Miss Harlowe," began the teacher impressively, "I have always entertained a high opinion of you as an honor girl. Your record during your freshman year seemed to indicate plainly that you had a very clear conception of what constitutes an Overton girl's standard of honor. Within the past week, however, something has happened that forces me to admit that I am deeply disappointed in you." Miss Duncan paused.

Grace's expressive face paled a trifle. A

look of wonder mingled with hurt pride leaped into her gray eyes. "I don't understand you, Miss Duncan," she said quietly. "What have I done to disappoint you?"

Miss Duncan picked up a number of closely written sheets of folded paper and handed them to Grace, who unfolded them, staring almost stupidly at the sheet that lay on top. A wave of crimson flooded her recently pale cheeks. "Why—what—where did you get this?" she stammered. "It is my theme."

"You mean it is the original from which you copied yours," put in Miss Duncan dryly. "Is that your handwriting?"

"No," replied Grace, in a puzzled tone.

"Is this your writing?" questioned Miss Duncan, suddenly producing another theme from the drawer of her desk.

"Yes," was Grace's prompt answer. "I handed it in to you instead of putting it in the collection box. You remember I told you I had lost the first one I wrote and asked for more time."

"I remember perfectly," was the significant answer. "Is this theme," pointing to the one Grace still held, "the one you say you lost?"

"The one I say I lost," repeated Grace, a glint of resentment darkening her eyes. "What do you mean, Miss Duncan?"

"It is My Theme."

Her bold question caused the instructor's lips to tighten. "You have not answered my question, Miss Harlowe," she said icily.

"No, this is not my theme," answered Grace; "that is, it is not in my handwriting. I do not recognize the writing." Grace ceased speaking and stared at the theme in sudden consternation. "Some one found my theme and copied it." Her voice sank almost to a whisper. A flush of shame for the unknown culprit dyed her cheeks anew.

"It would be better, perhaps," interrupted the teacher sarcastically, "if you admitted the truth of the affair at once, Miss Harlowe."

"There is nothing to admit," responded Grace steadily, "except that I lost my theme on the evening I wrote it. When I found it was gone I came to you at once and asked for another day's time. That same night I rewrote it as well as I could from memory and handed it to you the following day."

An ominous silence ensued. Then Miss Duncan said stiffly: "Miss Harlowe, the young woman who wrote the theme you have in your hand dropped it into the collection box of another section during the very evening you would have me believe you were writing it. It was brought to me early the next morning."

"How do you know that it was dropped into

the box the evening before?" flung back Grace, forgetting for an instant to whom she was speaking.

"Your question is hardly respectful, Miss Harlowe," returned Miss Duncan, coldly reproving. "I will answer it, however, by saying that I sent for the young woman and questioned her regarding the time she placed her theme in the box, without letting her know my motive in doing so. Her frank answer completely assured me that she was speaking the truth. At the same time she explained that she had been late with her theme on account of mislaying it. She had written it two days before and placed it in her desk. Then it had mysteriously vanished and suddenly reappeared in the same pigeonhole in her desk in which she had placed it. She assured me that directly she found it she took it to the box. Your theme is so suspiciously similar to hers that it is hardly possible to believe it to be merely a coincidence. In the face of the circumstances it looks as though you were the real offender."

Grace regarded Miss Duncan with mute reproach. She could not at once trust herself to speak.

"Have you anything to say to me, Miss Harlowe?" was the stern question.

"Only, that what I have previously said to you

is the truth," answered Grace, fighting down her desire to cry. Then, seized with a sudden idea, she said in a tone of subdued excitement, "Will you allow me to look at that theme again, Miss Duncan?"

Miss Duncan picked up the theme from the desk where Grace had laid it and handed it to her. A strip of paper had been pasted over the name in the upper left hand corner. Grace scanned each closely written page attentively. "This is my theme," she declared finally, "and I have thought of a way to prove that I wrote it. I did not steal it from another girl. I would not be so contemptible."

"I shall be very glad to have conclusive proof that you did not," commented Miss Duncan rather sarcastically. "Appearances are not in your favor, Miss Harlowe."

"I am sorry that you doubt my word, Miss Duncan," said Grace with gentle dignity, "because I am going to prove to you how utterly wrong you have been in suspecting me of such contemptible conduct. I wrote this theme in the room of a member of the senior class. She read it after I had written it. I feel sure that she can identify this as mine because when I rewrote it I could not remember a word of the original ending which she had particularly commended. I did the best I could with it, but it

wasn't in the least like the other," Grace ended earnestly.

"Will you tell me the name of the young woman in whose room you wrote your theme?" asked Miss Duncan, her stern face relaxing a little.

"It was Miss Ashe," returned Grace frankly.

Miss Duncan raised her eyebrows in surprise. "I should say you had strong evidence in your favor, Miss Harlowe."

"Will you ask Miss Ashe to come to your room after your last class to-day, Miss Duncan?" she asked eagerly. "I should like to show her the theme without explaining anything to her at first. I give you my word of honor I will say nothing about it to her in the meantime." Then, realizing that her word of honor was at present being seriously questioned, Grace blushed painfully.

Miss Duncan, understanding the blush, said less severely, "Very well, Miss Harlowe." She scrutinized Grace's fine, sensitive face for a moment, then added, "You may come at the same time if you wish."

Grace brightened, then shook her head positively. "Please let me come to see you tomorrow morning instead." She wished to give Miss Duncan perfect freedom to ask Mabel any questions she might find necessary to ask.

"To-morrow morning, then," acquiesced Miss Duncan graciously.

Grace turned to leave the room. At the door she hesitated, then walking back to the desk she said almost imploringly: "Please don't punish the other girl now, Miss Duncan. I do not know who she is, but I am sure she must have found my theme and copied it on the spur of the moment. I can't believe that she did it deliberately. If she did, then being found out by you will be lesson enough for her."

"I have not as yet exonerated you from this charge, Miss Harlowe," declared Miss Duncan stiffly, her brief graciousness vanishing like magic. "If the other girl is to blame, then she must suffer for her fault. Until I have seen Miss Ashe I shall say nothing. After that I can not promise."

Grace bowed and left the class room, her feeling toward the unknown plagiarist entirely one of pity. She had vindicated herself at the expense of exposing some one else without intent to do more than assert her own innocence, and she now wondered sadly if there were not some way in which she might persuade Miss Duncan to change her mind.

On her way from Miss Duncan's class room that morning Grace found herself walking directly behind Emma Dean. She was sauntering

across the campus, her near-sighted eyes fixed on a small, hurrying figure just ahead of her.

"Hello, Grace," was Emma's affable salutation as she turned at the touch of Grace's hand on her shoulder. "I was watching Miss Taylor. What a disappointment that girl is. The first week or two after her arrival at Wayne Hall I thought her delightful, but she has turned out to be anything but agreeable. She barely nodded to me this morning. I believe she is developing snobbish tendencies, which is a great mistake. Deliver me from snobs! We have very few of them at Overton, thank goodness."

But Grace could not help thinking that somewhere in the college community lived a girl who possessed a fault far greater than that of being a snob.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SUMMONS

THE prospective dinner at Vinton's at which Ruth Denton and Arline Thayer were to be guests of honor drove the unpleasant incident of the morning from Grace's mind for the time being. She had determined to keep her interview with Miss Duncan a secret from her friends. If it had involved only herself, she might possibly have told Anne of it, but since it concerned some one else, Grace's fine sense of honor forbade her making even Anne her confidant in the matter. She could not help speculating a little concerning the identity of the other girl. She had not the remotest idea as to who she might be. Whoever she was, she could not have realized what a dishonorable thing she had done, was Grace's charitable reflection. She wondered what Mabel would think when Miss Duncan asked her to identify the theme as the one Grace had written during that evening in Holland House.

"I'm going to stop thinking of it for the rest of the day," declared Grace half aloud, as she dressed for dinner late that afternoon. She started guiltily, glancing quickly to where Anne

sat mending a tiny tear in her white silk blouse. Anne, who was fully occupied with her mending, made no comment. She was so used to Grace's habit of thinking aloud that she had no idle curiosity regarding her friend's thoughts. Whatever Grace wished her to know she would hear in due season.

"Miriam and Elfreda are not going with us, you know," said Grace as they were about to leave their room.

"I didn't know it," commented Anne. "Why did they change their minds?"

"Miriam thinks you and I can do more toward restoring peace without her and Elfreda. She suspects that Ruth will satisfy Arline's curiosity and at the same time appease her wrath by telling what she refused to tell that other night, provided there are not too many listeners."

"What a wise girl Miriam is!" exclaimed Anne admiringly. "I never thought of that."

"Nor I," admitted Grace, "until she mentioned it. Then I saw the wisdom of it."

"Where are we to meet Ruth and Arline?" asked Anne. "Suppose both of them arrive at Vinton's before we do?"

"I thought of that, too," chuckled Grace, "so Arline is to come here, and Ruth is to wait for us at Vinton's. They can't possibly meet until

we are there to manage matters. Arline ought to be here by this time. Shall we go downstairs and wait for her?"

"There's the door bell now," said Anne. "That must be Arline."

Her supposition proved correct. Just as they reached the foot of the stairs the maid admitted the fluffy-haired little girl.

"Hello!" she called merrily. "I'm strictly on time, you see."

"So are we," smiled Anne. "Shall we start at once?"

"Yes, indeed," emphasized Arline. "I'm starved. I wasn't prepared in Greek to-day, and rushed through my luncheon in order to snatch a few minutes' study before class. I had my trouble for my pains, too. The bell rang before it was my turn to recite. Wasn't that fortunate?"

"I should say so," agreed Grace. "If it had been I, Professor Martin would have called on me first. You were born lucky, Daffydown-dilly."

"I don't think so," replied Arline gloomily. "I have all kinds of miserable, unpleasant things to bother me."

Anne and Grace exchanged significant glances behind the little girl's back. There was a chance for the success of their scheme. Arline was evi-

dently unhappy over her cavalier treatment of Ruth.

During the short walk to Vinton's all mention of Ruth's name was tacitly avoided. Arline chattered volubly about the reception. She had not enjoyed herself particularly. She had taken a freshman by the name of Violet Darby, who lived on the top floor of Morton House. She was considered the freshman beauty.

"Oh, I remember her!" exclaimed Grace. "Gertrude Wells introduced me to her. I asked for a dance, but her card was full to overflowing. She is beautiful. She has such wonderful golden hair, and her brown eyes are in such striking contrast to her hair and fair complexion. She is awfully popular, I suppose."

"Yes, the Morton House girls are all rushing her. I was surprised to think she accepted my invitation," returned Arline.

"I don't think that was so very surprising," declared Grace bluntly. "Arline Thayer is also a Morton House favorite."

"Violet is the reigning favorite just at present," rejoined Arline. "It's her fatal beauty. She is a very nice girl, though. Not a bit snobbish or conceited. Everyone in the house likes her. You must become better acquainted with her."

"Here we are at Vinton's," announced

Grace. "I ordered one of the alcove tables reserved for us."

As they made their way to the alcove a girl rose from her seat in the shadow to greet them. It was Ruth, and as Arline caught sight of her her baby face grew dark. "How dared you?" she asked accusingly, turning toward Grace. "You know we are not friends. I don't wish to see her. I'm going straight home. I suppose she planned all this. She has tried to make up with me, but I shall never again be friends with her."

"Please listen to me, Arline," began Grace, taking the angry little girl by the arm and pulling her gently toward the alcove. Ruth had risen from the table, a look of mingled pain and bewilderment on her face.

"I didn't know Arline was to be here," she said tremulously. "Please tell her I didn't know it." She turned appealing eyes toward Grace.

"Suppose we sit down at our table and talk over this matter," suggested Grace, in her most casual manner. Her calm gray eyes rested first on Ruth, then traveled to Arline, who hesitated briefly, then with an angry shrug of her shoulders seated herself in the nearest chair. Grace motioned Anne and Ruth to their chairs, then seating herself she said gently: "Now, children,

suppose we clear up some of these doubts and misunderstanding by holding court? I am going to be the prosecuting attorney. Anne can be the counsel for the defense. Arline can borrow her first, then Ruth can have her. When all the evidence is in I shall appoint myself as judge and jury. It means a great deal of work for me, but the law must take its course. I, therefore, summon you both into court."

## CHAPTER XIII

### GRACE HOLDS COURT

IN spite of her displeasure, Arline giggled faintly at Grace's impromptu session of court. Ruth's sad little face brightened, while Anne listened to her friend with open admiration. She could have conceived of no surer way to settle the difference that had made them so unhappy.

"You must remember," Grace said solemnly, "that there can be no dinner until the court has disposed of its first case. This is a murder trial, therefore the chief object of the court is to find the murderer of one friendship, done to death in cruel fashion. I wish I had Emma Dean's glasses to make me look more imposing. I wonder what kind of voice a prosecuting attorney would have. Dearly beloved," went on Grace impressively, "they don't say that in court, I know, but then I'm going to be different from most prosecuting attorneys."

"There isn't the least doubt of that," interposed Anne slyly.

"Silence," commanded Grace severely. "I shall have you arrested for contempt of court. Then there won't be any counsel for the defense.

The first witness, that's you, Arline, will please take the stand. You needn't really move, you know. We will take a few things for granted. Sit up straight and be as dignified as possible. Fold your hands on the table. That's right. Now, state where and when you first met the defendant. Ruth can be the defendant until I question her. Then you'll have to play the part."

"Over a year ago, at Morton House," stated Arline obediently.

"What was your opinion of the defendant?"

"I liked her better than any other girl I had ever met," confessed Arline.

"Defendant number two, what did you think of Arline Thayer?" quizzed Grace, eyeing Ruth expectantly.

"I liked her as much as she liked me," replied Ruth promptly.

"When did your first disagreement occur?" probed Grace, turning from Ruth to Arline.

"Here, at this very table," returned Arline in a low tone.

"Whose fault was it?" inquired Grace wickedly.

"Mine!" exclaimed Ruth and Arline simultaneously.

"Thank you," returned Grace soberly. "Such spontaneity on the part of the defendants is

very refreshing. It also simplifies the case and saves the court considerable trouble. There is hope that the court will be dismissed in time for dinner. As prosecuting attorney I will now deliver my charge. I shall have to deliver it sitting down or attract too much attention to the case. Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the evidence. You think, no doubt, that murder has been done. This is not so. The friendship between Defendant Number One," Grace bowed to Arline, "and Defendant Number Two," she made a second bow to Ruth, "received a blow on the head which rendered it unconscious for some time. It had no intention of dying, but both prisoners treated it with extreme cruelty, not allowing it to hold up its poor crippled head. I ask you, Gentlemen of the jury, to consider well what shall be the penalty for assaulting and battering friendship with intent to kill. Gentlemen of the jury, are you ready for the question?"

"We are," Grace answered for the jury in a deep voice that elicited little shrieks of laughter from her companions.

"What shall be the fate of these malefactors?" demanded Grace in her prosecuting attorney voice, after the jury had rendered a verdict of guilty. "Be deliberate in your decision, but don't be all night about it."

"They shall be made to shake hands across

the table or suffer the full penalty of the law," stated the judge.

"What is the full penalty of the law?"

"No dinner," was the prompt answer.

"Counsel for the defense, have you anything to say? I should have asked you before sentence was pronounced, but it doesn't matter. The prosecuting attorney always tries to fix things to suit himself, no matter what any one else thinks."

"The counsel for the defense is a mere blot on the landscape in this trial," jeered Anne.

"How did you guess it?" beamed the prosecuting attorney. "Prisoners, the sentence will be executed at once. Shake hands."

Ruth's hand was stretched across the table to meet Arline's.

"I'm awfully sorry, Ruth," said Arline, her voice trembling slightly. "I should never have asked you to tell what you wished to keep secret."

"And I shouldn't have been so silly as to refuse to tell," declared Ruth bravely. "I'm going to tell you now, and you mustn't stop me. I was brought up in an orphan asylum. That's why I didn't care to tell you about myself that evening."

"You poor, precious dear!" exclaimed Arline. "How can I ever forgive myself for being

so horrid? Won't you forgive me, Ruth? I never supposed it was anything like that. I was angry because you called me your best friend, but wouldn't trust me. I'm so sorry. I'll never speak of it again to you." Arline looked appealingly at Ruth, her blue eyes misty.

"But I want you to think of it. I had made up my mind to tell you. Then you passed me on the campus without speaking, and somehow I didn't dare come near you after that."

"I've been perfectly horrid, I know," admitted Arline contritely. "I've been so used to having my own way that I try to bend everyone I know to it."

"I don't mind telling you girls about myself now. At first I was ashamed of my poverty," confessed Ruth. "After I went to Arline's beautiful home I hated to say anything about it to any one. Then Arline grew angry with me. I realized afterward that I had been foolish not to tell her my story. There isn't much to tell. I was picked up in a railroad wreck on a westbound train when I was four years old. I can just remember getting into the train with my mother. She was burned to death in the wreck, but by some miracle I was saved. I knew my name, Ruth Irving Denton, my age, and around my neck mother had tied a little packet containing some money, a letter and a gold watch. A

woman who lived near where the wreck occurred took charge of me, and as no one came for me, in time I was sent to a home. I lived there until I was fourteen. The matron was good to us, and considering we were all homeless waifs we fared very well."

"And the letter?" asked Grace.

"It was from my father to my mother, giving all the directions for our journey west. With it had been enclosed a money order for four hundred dollars, which my mother had evidently cashed. I still have the letter.

"Then a man and his wife took me. They were good to me and sent me to school. I studied hard and finished high school when I was seventeen. Then I won a scholarship of one hundred dollars a year. I was determined to go to college, but the people with whom I lived thought differently. So I left them a year ago last fall and came to Overton, resolving to make my own way. They were so angry with me for leaving them they would have nothing further to do with me. So you see I had not a friend in the world until I met you girls."

"But you have me now," comforted Arline, patting Ruth's hand. "I'll never be so silly again. Poor little girl!"

"And you have Anne and me," added Grace. "Don't forget Miriam and Elfreda, either."

"I am rich in friends now," said Ruth softly.

"Perhaps your father isn't really dead, Ruth!" exclaimed Grace.

"He must be," said Ruth sadly. "I have only one thing that belonged to him, a heavy gold watch with his full name, 'Arthur Northrup Denton,' engraved on the inside of the back case. It is a valuable watch, but I have always declared I would starve rather than part with it."

"Perhaps it may help you to find him some day," suggested Grace thoughtfully.

"Don't you know the name of the town in Nevada where he first lived?" asked Anne.

"He went to Humboldt, and from there into the mountains," replied Ruth. "Since that time all trace of him has been lost. I never knew my own story until on the day I became fourteen years of age. Then the matron told me. It was at the time that I was getting ready to go to live with the man and his wife of whom I have spoken. After that it seemed as though the whole world changed for me. I didn't mind being poor, nor having to work, for I had the glorious thought that perhaps my father was still alive and that some time I should see him again. I wrote several letters to him, sending them to Humboldt, but they always came back to me.

"After a while I gave up all hope and stopped

writing. I couldn't bear to think of having more letters come back unclaimed. I tried to forget that I had even dreamed of seeing my father again, and began to put my whole mind on going to college. Now I am so thankful that I persevered and won the scholarship. There were times when I was very unhappy over leaving the only home I had ever known, outside the orphanage. Still I could not rid myself of the conviction that I had taken a step in the right direction. Later, when I met you girls, I was sure of it. Even though I didn't find my father, I found true and loyal friends who have crowded more pleasure and happiness into one short year than I ever had in all my life before."

"I'll lend you half of my father, Ruth," offered Arline generously. "He is almost as fond of you as he is of me. You remember he said so."

"Weren't you green with jealousy when he admitted it?" teased Anne.

"Not a bit of it," protested Arline stoutly. "I only wish Ruth were my sister."

"I'd like to be the one to find Ruth's father," mused Grace.

Anne smiled. "Even college can't uproot Grace's sleuthing tendencies. She has an absolute genius for ferreting out mysteries."

"No, I haven't," contradicted Grace. "If I

had—" she stopped. She had been on the point of remarking that she would have known who had stolen and used her theme.

"If you had what?" asked Arline curiously.

"If I had the genius of which Arline prattles, I'd be at the head of the New York Detective Bureau," finished Grace. And Anne alone knew that Grace had purposely substituted this flippant answer to conceal her real thought.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GRACE MAKES A RESOLUTION

"WHAT do you think has happened?" demanded J. Elfreda Briggs, bursting into the room where Anne and Grace were busily making up for lost time. They had lingered at Vinton's until after eight o'clock. Then the thought of to-morrow with its eternal round of classes had driven them home, reluctantly enough, to where their books awaited them. It was almost nine o'clock before they had actually settled themselves, and Elfreda's sudden, tempestuous entrance caused Anne to lay down her Horace with an air of patient resignation. "We might as well begin saying 'unprepared' now, and grow accustomed to the sound of our own voices," she announced.

"I think so, too," agreed Grace. "Well, Elfreda, why this thusness? What has happened. Have you been elected to the Pi Beta Gamma, or did you get an unusually large check from home?"

"Catch the P. B. Gammas troubling themselves about me," scoffed Elfreda. "As for a check, I've written for it, but so far I've seen no signs of it. When I do lay hands on it we'll

celebrate the event with feasting and merry-making."

"Then I can't guess," sighed Grace. "You'd better tell us."

"Well," began Elfreda, her eyes twinkling, "I have a dinner invitation for to-morrow night at Martell's."

"That is nothing startling," scoffed Anne. "We've just come from Vinton's."

"But the rest of my news is remarkable," persisted the stout girl. "I am invited to dine" —Elfreda paused, then finished impressively— "with the Anarchist."

"You don't mean it!" Grace looked her surprise.

"Of course I mean it," retorted Elfreda. "I wouldn't say so if I didn't. She delivered her invitation on the way over to chapel this morning. I'd give you an imitation of the way she did it if I hadn't accepted."

Grace shot a quick, approving glance toward Elfreda which the latter saw and interpreted correctly. "I wouldn't have thought about that last year, would I, Grace?" she asked shyly.

Grace laughed rather confusedly. "How did you guess so much? The way you stumble upon things is positively uncanny."

"Observation, my dear, observation," returned Elfreda patronizingly. "One can learn

almost everything about everybody if one keeps one's eyes open."

"You seem to carry out your own theory," admitted Grace smilingly. "Have you finished your work for to-night?"

"Years ago," declared Elfreda extravagantly. "Miriam hasn't, at least she was still studying when I left the room. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make some fudge. Mrs. Elwood will let me have some milk and we have the rest of the stuff in our room. I'll send Miriam in here. Then I can have the whole room to myself. When it's done, I'll call you."

With a joyful skip that fairly jarred the furniture in the room Elfreda bounded through the doorway and vanished. Two minutes later Miriam appeared, an amused look on her dark face, several books tucked under one arm. "Driven from home," she declaimed, posing on the threshold, her free hand appealingly extended. "Will no one help me?"

"I will." Grace reached forth her hand, dragging Miriam into the room. "Hurry through your lessons and we'll have a spread. I'm sorry you weren't with us to-night, but Anne and I weren't sure as to just how successfully our plan would work. Everything went smoothly, though." Grace related briefly what had taken place at the dinner.

"I am glad Ruth and Arline settled their differences," commented Miriam. "We all knew that Arline was at fault. She is such a dear little thing, one hesitates to say so."

"She was very sweet to-night," interposed Anne. "She asked Ruth's forgiveness and took the blame for their little coolness on her own shoulders."

"I don't wish to cause dissension in this happy band, but we really must stop talking and study," warned Grace. "I haven't made a satisfactory recitation this week, and I vote for reform."

"All right, my dear Miss Harlowe," flung back Miriam. "'Work, for the Night is Coming.'"

"You mean going," giggled Anne.

After this interchange of flippant remarks silence reigned, broken only by the sound of turning leaves or an occasional sigh over the appalling length of a lesson. The three girls were fully absorbed in their work when Elfreda poked her head in the room to announce that the fudge was made. "I've a bottle of cunning little pickles, and a box of cheese wafers. I made some tea, too. Hurry, or it will be half-past ten before we have time to eat a single thing."

"I can't possibly finish studying my Latin to-night," sighed Miriam. "Every day the lessons

seem to get longer. Miss Arthur hasn't a spark of compassion."

"Don't stop to grumble," commanded Elfreda. "Come along."

The half-past ten o'clock bell rang before the fudge was half gone. In fact, it was after eleven before the quartette prepared for sleep. During the evening all thought of the troublesome theme had left Grace's mind. It was not until after she had turned out the light and gone to bed that it came back to her with such disagreeable force that for the time being all idea of sleep fled. For the first time since her entrance into Overton College she had incurred the displeasure of one in authority over her, and through no fault of her own.

As Grace lay staring into the darkness the recollection of that bitter time during her junior year at high school, when Miss Thompson had accused her of shielding the girl who had destroyed the principal's personal papers, came back, vivid and complete. Eleanor Savelli, now numbered among her dearest friends and a member of the Phi Sigma Tau, had been the transgressor, and Grace had refused to voice her suspicions. It had all come right in the end, although Miss Thompson's displeasure had been hard to bear.

Perhaps this affair would end happily, too.

Suppose the other girl had chosen the same subject? Grace gave vent to a soft exclamation of impatience at her own supposition. She wished she dared believe that it were so, but common sense told her that she could not hope to deceive herself by any such delusion.

"Who could the girl be?" Grace asked herself over and over. Surely, no one of her intimate friends. Nor any girl at Wayne Hall, either. Whoever was guilty would be severely punished, perhaps sent home. Overton prided itself on its honor. Its children must be above reproach at all times. Mabel's evidence would clear her. But what of the other girl?

"Whoever she is," speculated Grace, "by this time she is probably sorry for what she did. I suppose she is frightened, too. I'm going to make Miss Duncan let her off this once, and if I can find out who she is, I'm going to stand by her so faithfully that she'll never again care to do a dishonest thing as long as she lives."

It was a long time before Grace fell asleep that night. Her perturbed state of mind over the stolen theme had served to make her wakeful, and her thoughts flitted from one subject to another, as she lay waiting for the sleep that refused to come, always returning, however, to that of the unlucky theme.

When, at last, it came, it brought disturbing

dreams, in which she figured as the transgressor. The theme did not belong to her, but to J. Elfreda Briggs. She had stolen it from the pocket of Elfreda's brown serge coat, and Miss Duncan had seen her take it. During the morning exercises in the chapel, Miss Duncan had mounted the steps of the platform, and, standing beside Dr. Morton, had shouted forth her guilt to the whole college, while she had endeavored to creep out of the chapel unnoticed.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE QUALITY OF MERCY

THE next morning Grace felt singularly dispirited as she went down to breakfast. It had been raining, and the dreary outlook caused the gloomy lines, "The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year," to run through her head with maddening persistency.

"What's the matter, Grace?" inquired Emma Dean. "That chief-mourner expression of yours is doubly depressing on a day like this. Did you eat too much fudge last night, or have you been conditioned in math.?"

"You are a wild guesser, Emma," returned Grace, smiling faintly. "My troubles are of an entirely different nature. But how did you know we made fudge last night, and why didn't you come in and have some?"

"I never go where I am not invited," was the significant retort.

"Nonsense!" declared Grace. "You are always welcome, and you know it. The spread was in Miriam's room, but you know who your friends are, don't you?"

"Don't worry, I'm not offended," Emma assured Grace good-humoredly. "I came in just

before the ten-thirty bell last night and heard sounds of revelry as I passed by."

"There's plenty of fudge on our table," put in Miriam Nesbit. "Help yourself to it whenever the spirit moves you."

"Where is Mildred Taylor this morning?" asked Irene Evans, glancing toward Mildred's vacant place.

"Miss Taylor is ill this morning," answered a prim voice from the end of the table.

With one accord all eyes were turned in the direction of the voice. The Anarchist had actually spoken at the table! It was unbelievable. What followed was even more surprising. The Anarchist swept the table with a defiant look, then said, with startling distinctness, "If she has not fully recovered by tonight I shall send for a physician. In the meantime I shall remain with her to care for her."

"That is very kind in you, I am sure," ventured Emma Dean. Surprise had tied the tongues of the others.

"Not in the least," contradicted the Anarchist coldly. "As her roommate, common humanity demands that I assume a certain amount of responsibility for her welfare."

"Oh, yes, of course," agreed Emma hastily. "Please let us know when we may run in to see her. Excuse me, everybody. I must run up-

stairs and study a little before going to chapel."

Several freshmen followed her lead and filed decorously out the door with preternaturally solemn faces that broke into smiles the moment the door closed behind them.

The Anarchist, however, went on eating her breakfast, quite unaware that she had created the slightest ripple of amusement. When Elfreda rose to leave the dining room the strange young woman rose, too, and walked sedately out of the room in the stout girl's wake.

"Elfreda has evidently made a conquest," remarked Miriam to Grace. "See how tamely the haughty Anarchist follows at her heels."

"It's astonishing, but splendid, I think," said Grace decidedly. "Isn't it strange how much influence for good one girl can have over another? For some reason or other Elfreda knows just how to bring the best in Miss Atkins to the surface. Shall we run up and see Miss Taylor for a moment?"

"You go this morning, Grace," urged Miriam. "I'll stop and see her at noon. I haven't the time just now."

"I'll go with you," volunteered Anne.

Grace knocked gently on the slightly opened door, then, receiving no answer, opened it softly. She paused irresolutely on the threshold, Anne

peering over her shoulder. Laura Atkins had left the room, but Mildred Taylor, fully dressed, sat at the window looking listlessly out. If she heard Grace's light knock she paid no attention to it. It was not until Grace said rather diffidently, "We heard you were ill and thought we'd come in to see you," that the girl at the window turned toward Grace. Her piquant little face was drawn and pale, and her eyes looked suspiciously red. She eyed Grace almost sulkily, then said slowly, "It was kind of you to come, but I shall be all right to-morrow." Under Grace's serious glance her eyes fell, then, to her visitors' amazement, she burst into tears. Grace crossed the room. Her arm slid across the sobbing freshman's shoulders in silent sympathy. "Can't you tell me what troubles you?" she asked softly.

Mildred shook off the comforting arm with a muttered: "Let me alone. I can't tell you, of all persons. Go away."

"Why can't you tell me?" persisted Grace gently.

"Because I can't. Won't you please go. I don't wish to talk to any one," wailed Mildred.

Grace walked toward the door, her eyes on the weeping girl. Anne, who had kept strictly in the background during the little scene, stepped out into the hall, Grace following.

"That was hardly my idea of a cordial reception," was Anne's dry comment as they entered their own room.

"That young woman has something on her mind," declared Grace. "Her illness is not physical. It is mental. Either some one has torn her feelings to shreds or else she has done something she is ashamed of and remorse has overtaken her."

"Unless she has had bad news from home or has been conditioned," suggested Anne.

"I don't believe it's either," said Grace, shaking her head. "I believe this is something different. Of late she has been acting strangely. Ever since the reception she has avoided me. Anne Pierson, do you see the time? We'll be late for chapel!" gasped Grace in consternation.

With one accord the two friends gathered up their wraps, putting them on as they ran.

After chapel Grace left Anne at the door of Science Hall and went on to Overton Hall. She wished to see Miss Duncan before her first class recited, and learn the latest developments of her case. Until chapel exercises were over, Grace had refused to allow her mind to dwell on her trouble, but now, as she climbed slowly up the broad stairway to Miss Duncan's class room, the whole unhappy affair rose before her.

Miss Duncan was sitting at her desk as Grace

entered. She looked at her watch, smiled frankly at Grace and said in her usual business-like way, "I can give you only ten minutes, Miss Harlowe."

The teacher's friendly tone made Grace's heart leap. She recognized the fact that Miss Duncan no longer looked upon her with suspicion.

"Your innocence was clearly proven by Miss Ashe," said Miss Duncan in her blunt fashion, coming at once to the point. "I recognize your claim to the authorship of the theme. The other young woman was the real plagiarist. It was a contemptible trick and not in keeping with Overton standards."

"What will happen to this other girl, Miss Duncan?" asked Grace apprehensively, her eyes fixed on Miss Duncan.

"What do you think she deserves?" inquired Miss Duncan quizzically.

"A chance to redeem herself," was the prompt reply. "No one except you knows who she is. I don't wish to know her identity, and I am sure Miss Ashe doesn't. Couldn't you send for the girl and tell her that it would be a secret between just you two. That you were willing to forget it had happened if she were willing to start all over again and build her college foundation fairly and squarely. It wouldn't be of

any benefit to her to place her fault before the dean. No doubt she would be dismissed, and that dismissal might spoil her whole life."

"You are an eloquent pleader, Miss Harlowe," returned Miss Duncan. "As this is strictly an affair of one of my classes, I consider that I am at liberty to do as I think best about placing this matter before the dean. If I did see fit to do so I hardly think it would mean dismissal, particularly if I took you with me to plead the cause of the offender. Come to me this afternoon after my last class and I will give you my answer."

Grace left the class room far more cheerfully than she had entered. Her own vindication had not impressed her half so deeply as Miss Duncan's apparently lenient attitude toward the girl who had been false to herself and to Overton.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A DISGRUNTLED REFORMER

GRACE was not disappointed. Miss Duncan graciously agreed to let the culprit off with a severe reprimand. Grace ran joyfully down the campus to Holland House. She wished to tell Mabel Ashe the good news.

"Horrid little copy-cat! She doesn't deserve it," was Mabel's unsympathetic comment as Grace related what had passed between Miss Duncan and herself. "You know who she is, don't you, Grace?"

Grace shook her head. "I haven't the slightest idea," she said soberly. "I can't believe it was any one at Wayne Hall. You don't suspect any one, do you?"

"No," returned Mabel. "I haven't become very well acquainted with the freshmen this year, so far. I suppose you did right in not exposing this girl. I don't know whether I should be quite as charitable as you. If you hadn't had a witness who saw you write the theme, you would now be under a cloud. What I can't forget is the fact that she went so far as to try to make Miss Duncan believe that you really copied it. Miss Duncan said she insisted that

the theme had disappeared from her room. Think how foolish she must have felt when Miss Duncan confronted her with the truth yesterday afternoon and made her confess!"

"Oh, Mabel!" Grace's distressed tone caused the pretty senior to rise and stand in front of Grace's chair.

"What's the matter, Gracie," she said, taking Grace's hands in hers.

Grace raised her gray eyes to meet the inquiring brown ones bent on her. "I'm so sorry," she said sadly, "but the girl who took my theme does live in Wayne Hall."

"How do you know?" asked Mabel quickly.

"From what you said," returned Grace. "If she accused me of taking her theme from her room, isn't it highly probable that her room is in Wayne Hall? I wouldn't be likely to go into one of the campus houses to steal a theme, would I? I must have dropped it in the hall or on the stairs that night, and she must have come into the house directly after I did and picked it up. I don't like to believe that one of our girls did it," Grace concluded sorrowfully, "but I am afraid it's true."

"Some day you'll stumble upon the guilty girl when you least expect to find her," prophesied Mabel. "Now forget her, and tell me what you and your chums are going to do over

Thanksgiving. I am going to a dance on Thanksgiving night with a Willston man. His fraternity is giving it."

"I don't know any college men in this part of the world," sighed Grace regretfully, "therefore I never have any invitations to man dances."

"Wait until my cousin comes up here. He is a Columbia man and you will like him immensely. I know a number of the Willston men, too. Why don't you go with me to the football game Thanksgiving Day? You are not going away, are you? It is only a four days' vacation, you know."

"No, we haven't any particular place to go. Last year we spent our Thanksgiving vacation with the Southards in New York. You knew about that."

"You lucky things," laughed Mabel. "I envy you your friendship with Everett Southard and his sister."

"Some day you must meet them," planned Grace. "They are delightful people. Mr. Southard is appearing in Shakespearian roles in the large cities this season, and Miss Southard is in Florida visiting friends. If they were in New York they would insist on our going to them for the holidays. I must run away now. It is almost dinner time and I promised to hook up

Elfreda's new gown. Miriam went over to Morton House with Gertrude Wells, and won't return until late, and Elfreda is going to dine with the Anarchist."

"Really!" exclaimed Mabel. "Elfreda seems to be coming to the front this year, doesn't she?"

"She is turning out splendidly," said Grace warmly. "She stands high in every one of her classes, and she is so ridiculously funny that we would feel lost without her. She says things in the same droll way that a young man we know in Oakdale does. But I mustn't stay another minute. Good-bye, Mabel, I'll see you in a day or two."

Grace darted across the campus and ran rapidly in the direction of Wayne Hall. She loved to run and her fleetness of foot had served her well on more than one occasion. Only that day she had complained to Miriam that it had been years since she had indulged in a good run. Miriam had laughingly accused her of still being a tomboy, and had proposed that they take a long tramp on Saturday. "You can run up and down the road to your heart's content when we get far enough away from Overton so that no one will see you and think you have suddenly gone crazy," Miriam had declared good-naturedly.

Bounding up the steps two at a time, Grace reached the front door of Wayne Hall without drawing a laboring breath. "I'm certainly in good condition," she laughed to herself, inhaling deeply and inflating her chest. "I hope I'll be chosen to play on the team this year." She rang a third time before the door was opened by Emma Dean, who grumbled at her repeated ringing and then announced that she had rung six times that afternoon before any one had condescended to let her in.

"Have you seen Elfreda?" flung back Grace on her way upstairs.

"You'd better hurry," called Emma after her. "I heard her growling to herself as I passed her door."

"I began to think you were never coming," greeted Elfreda, as Grace burst into the room, her eyes bright and her cheeks becomingly flushed from her recent run across the campus.

"Why didn't you ask some one else to hook you up?" retorted Grace mischievously, throwing down her gloves and beginning on the top hook.

"Because I wanted you to see how nice I looked in this new frock," replied the stout girl. "If I had not stipulated that you were to perform this extremely important service for me, you would have in all probability absented your-

self from my immediate vicinity, unmindful of the rare exhibition of youth and beauty that was being prepared for you in my room."

"If I had closed my eyes I could have sworn it was Miss Atkins," laughed Grace. "Even she herself couldn't fail to recognize that impersonation. It's ridiculously funny, Elfreda, but I wish you wouldn't do it." As Grace and Elfreda were standing with their backs directly away from the door neither girl saw the tense little figure that stood rigid, one hand on the door casing, listening with eyebrows drawn fiercely together. An instant later it had vanished. Grace, after triumphantly placing the last hook in its eye, began helping Elfreda find her handkerchief and gloves. "Now you have everything you need," she declared, holding up the stout girl's coat. "Do you wait here for your dinner partner or does she call for you?"

"She is coming in here for me," answered Elfreda. "I wish she would hurry along. I haven't had even a cracker to eat since luncheon and I'm famished."

"I think I'll go if you don't mind. I'm hungry, too. I must see if Anne has come in yet. Miss Atkins will be here in a moment. Goodbye. I hope you will have a nice time. I am so glad she invited you."

Grace crossed the hall to her own room. Anne

was rearranging her hair preparatory to going down to dinner.

"I think I'll do my hair over again," decided Grace. "That run across the campus shook most of my hairpins loose. It will be at least ten minutes before the bell rings, so I shall have plenty of time." But her hair proved refractory and the clang of the dinner bell found her tucking in a last unruly lock. "I'm going on downstairs, Grace," called Anne from the doorway.

"All right," answered Grace. As she passed Elfreda's room she heard her name uttered in a sibilant whisper. Wheeling at the sound, Grace stepped to the stout girl's door. Elfreda drew her in and, closing the door, said nervously: "What do you suppose has happened? I waited and waited for the An—Miss Atkins and she didn't appear, so I went down to her room and found the door closed. I knocked at least a dozen times, until my knuckles ached, but not a sound came from within. Then I came back to my room and waited. She hasn't materialized yet. I went down to her door just now and knocked again, but, nothing doing." In her agitation Elfreda dropped into slang.

"That is strange," agreed Grace. "Do you suppose she has been taken suddenly ill?"

"Search me," declared Elfreda wearily. "She ought to be called the Riddle. She is past

solution, isn't she? I'm hungry, and if she doesn't appear within the next five minutes I'm going to put on my old brown serge dress and go down to dinner. I'm not used to being invited out to dine and then deserted before I've even had a chance to look at the bill of fare."

"Never mind," comforted Grace. "I'll ask you to dinner at Martell's next week and won't desert you either. Wait a minute. I will go down to the dining room and see if by any chance she could be there. Then I'll come upstairs and let you know. If she isn't there you had better change your gown and go downstairs with me."

"She isn't there," reported Grace, five minutes later. "Miss Taylor is, but her roommate is missing."

" 'Parted at the altar,' " quoted Elfreda dramatically. "Will you please unhook me?"

For the second time that night Grace busied herself with the troublesome hooks and eyes. Elfreda jerked off the new gown. Her temper was rising. "This is what comes of cultivating freaks," she muttered, lapsing into her old rudeness. "I might have known she'd do something. Catch me on any more reform committees!"

"The way of the reformer is hard," soothed Grace, as she picked up the gown Elfreda had thrown in a heap on the floor, and folding it,

laid it across the foot of the stout girl's couch.

Elfreda, who was reaching into the closet for her brown serge dress, wheeled about, regarding Grace solemnly. "Too hard for me," she declared. "Hereafter, the Anarchist can attend to her own reformation. The Briggs Helping Hand Society has disbanded."

## CHAPTER XVII

### MAKING OTHER GIRLS HAPPY

THE Thanksgiving holiday was welcomed with acclamation by the students of Overton College, who, with a few exceptions, ate their Thanksgiving dinners at their various campus houses and boarding places. During the four days tables at Martell's and Vinton's were in demand and a continuous succession of dinners and luncheons made serious inroads in the monthly allowances of the hospitable entertainers.

The month of December dragged discouragingly, however, and when the time really did arrive to pack and be off for the Christmas holidays the latent energy that suddenly developed for packing trunks and making calls caused the faculty to sigh with regret that it had not been used in the pursuit of knowledge.

Nothing of any event had happened at Wayne Hall. Since the evening when Elfreda had waited in vain for Laura Atkins, whose invitation to dinner she had accepted, this peculiar young woman had offered neither apology nor explanation for her inexplicable behavior. In fact, the next morning she had completely ig-

nored Elfreda, who, feeling herself to be the aggrieved one, had made no attempt to discover what had prompted this glaring disregard of etiquette on the part of the eccentric freshman.

For a week afterward Elfreda discussed and rediscussed the mystery with Grace, Anne and Miriam. Then she gave up in disgust and turned her attention to basketball. She had lost considerable weight and was now a member of the scrub team. Her greatest ambition was to make the real team in her junior year, and with that intent she sturdily refused to eat sweet things, took long walks and daily haunted the gymnasium, going through the various forms of exercises she had elected to take with commendable persistency.

Grace had never sought to discover the identity of the freshman who had stolen her theme. She felt reasonably certain that the same roof covered them both, but she never allowed herself to reach the point of laying the finger of suspicion on any one in particular. That she had been vindicated of the charge was quite enough for her, but she could not resist wondering occasionally what had prompted the deed, and whether the other girl had turned over a new leaf.

One other thing troubled Grace not a little. Mildred Taylor had become extremely intimate

with Mary Hampton and Alberta Wicks. Both young women were frequent guests for dinner at Wayne Hall, and Mildred spent her spare time almost entirely in their society. As the two juniors were extremely unpopular with the Wayne Hall girls a peculiar constraint invariably fell upon the table when either young woman was Mildred's guest for the evening. "One has to weigh one's words before speaking when Alberta Wicks or Mary Hampton are here," Emma Dean had declared significantly to Irene Evans, and this seemed to be the prevalent opinion among the students who lived at Wayne Hall.

Mildred's attitude toward Grace had not changed. In manner she was more distant than ever, and except for a slight bow when chance brought her face to face with Grace, she gave no other evidence of having been more than the merest acquaintance. Her dislike for her roommate had to all appearances disappeared, and Laura Atkins was now seen occasionally in company with Mildred and her two mischievous junior friends.

Such was the situation when the longed-for Christmas vacation arrived. Grace Harlowe's thoughts were not on her own perplexities as she walked toward Wayne Hall after finishing her last round of calls. A new problem had arisen,

and as she swung along through the crisp winter air she was deep in thought. It was peculiar Christmas weather. A light snow had fallen, but through the patches of white lying softly on the campus the grass still showed spots of green. It had been an unusually long, warm fall, and to Grace, whose winters had been spent much farther north, the mildness of December had seemed marvelous.

"There!" she exclaimed, stopping in the middle of the walk to consult a small leather book, and drawing a pencil through the last item, "I can go home in peace. I have every single thing done, even to notifying the expressman to come for my trunk."

A sudden trill sounded down the street behind her. Turning her head, Grace saw Arline Thayer bearing down upon her. "I thought I'd never make you hear me," panted the little girl. "Ruth is going home with me after all."

"I thought she would," laughed Grace. "She assured me last night that she wouldn't think of imposing upon you, but I know your powers of persuasion. You have given Ruth a great deal of happiness, Arline, and I am sure she appreciates it, too."

Arline shook her curly head. "I don't deserve any credit. I am nice with her because I like her. I am consulting my own selfish pleas-

ure, you see, and that doesn't count. If I didn't care for Ruth I am afraid I wouldn't bother my head about helping her to have good times."

"You are frank, at least," smiled Grace.

"Seriously speaking, I am really very selfish," admitted Arline. "I never think of doing good for unselfish reasons. I don't find any particular interest in being nice with girls who do not appeal to me. That sounds terribly cold-blooded, doesn't it? They say an only child is always selfish, you know. Oh, forgive me, Grace; I forgot you were an 'only child.' Goodness knows you are not selfish."

"Yes, I am," contradicted Grace. "This is my second year at Overton and in all the time I've been here I have thought about nothing but myself and my friends and my good times. This afternoon when I started out to make calls I met Miss Barlow, a little freshman who lives in a boarding house down on Beech Street. We were going in the same direction and I thoughtlessly asked if she were going home for Christmas. A second afterward I was sorry. Her face fell, then she brightened a little and said, 'No.' She and seven other girls who lived in the same house were going to have a Christmas tree. For three days they had been busy decorating it. They had just finished. She asked, almost timidly, if I would like to see it. Of course I said

'Yes,' and we started for her boarding house. It is away down at the other end of Overton, and the most cheerless looking old barn of a house. The inside of the house is almost as cheerless as the outside, too. They had set up their tree in the parlor, and it was the only bright spot in the room.

"The tree was trimmed with popcorn and tinsel. There were funny little ornaments of colored paper, too, that they had made themselves. The presents were underneath the tree, a few forlorn looking little packages that made me feel like crying. I couldn't truthfully say that the tree was lovely, but I did tell Miss Barlow that I thought they had done splendidly and that I was sorry I hadn't known her better before, because I should have liked to help them with their tree.

"Then she said she had always wanted to know me, but I had so many friends among the influential girls at Overton she had thought I wouldn't care to know her. You can imagine how conscience stricken I felt. At home I was the friend of every girl in high school, and to think that I have been developing snobbish traits without realizing it!"

"Couldn't we do something nice for them before we go?" asked Arline generously. "It is only three o'clock. Why not start a movement

among the girls we know and send them a box? We can make the girls contribute, but we won't tell a soul who it's for. We will ask for money or presents—whatever they care to give," she went on eagerly. "What do you think of it? Do you suppose they would be offended?"

"I think it is the greatest thing out!" exclaimed Grace enthusiastically. "How can they be offended if we send the things anonymously?"

"They can't," chuckled Arline gleefully. "Now we had better separate. I'll do Morton House, Livingstone Hall and Wellington House. You can do Wayne Hall, Holland House and those two boarding houses on the corner below you. A lot of freshmen and sophomores live there. I'll come over to your house with my loot to-night, directly after dinner. Good-bye until then."

At seven o'clock that night Arline set down a heavy suit case and rang the bell at Wayne Hall. Grace, who had been watching for her from one of the living-room windows, hastened to open the door. "Thank goodness," sighed the little fluffy-haired girl. "I thought I would never be able to drag this suit case across the campus. It is crammed with things. I've been busier than all the busy bees that ever buzzed," she continued happily, following Grace into

the living room. "You can't begin to think how nice every one has been. About half of this stuff in the suit case is candy. One girl at Morton House had ten boxes given her. Of course, she couldn't eat it all, so she put in five." Arline did not volunteer the further information that she was the "girl" and that the candy was mostly from Willston men, with whom she was extremely popular.

"Another girl gave me two pairs of gloves. She had half a dozen pairs sent from home. She's going to New York for Christmas, so her home presents were sent to her here. Ever so many girls who had bought presents to take home gave me something from their store. I caught them just as they were finishing their packing. But, best of all," added Arline triumphantly, sinking into a chair and opening her brown suede handbag, "I have money—fifty dollars! That will help some, won't it?" She gave a little, gleeful chuckle.

"I should say so," gasped Grace. "I didn't do quite as well, although I have a whole table full of presents. Come on up and see them. None of us have put in our money contribution yet."

"How much have you?" asked Arline curiously.

"So far only twenty-five dollars," replied

Grace. "The girls in the boarding houses are not overburdened with money. I collected half of it from the Holland House girls. Miriam has promised me five dollars and I will put in five. That makes thirty-five dollars. I haven't asked Elfreda yet. She went out on a last shopping tour early this afternoon and hasn't come home yet. I suppose she went to Vinton's for dinner. Anne hasn't given me her money yet."

"Did you ask Miss Atkins?" was Arline's sudden inquiry. She was seized with a recollection of what transpired earlier in the fall.

Grace shook her head. "I couldn't. She hasn't spoken to me since the beginning of the term."

"Shall I run up and ask her?" proposed Arline. "She is quite cordial to me in that queer, stiff way of hers."

"It is only fair to give her a chance to contribute if she wishes," said Grace slowly. "I should say you might better ask her than leave her out."

"I'll go now, while I feel in the humor," declared Arline.

"You might ask Miss Taylor, too. She is Miss Atkins's roommate. She has been rather distant with me, so I haven't approached her on the subject."

Arline danced off on her errand with joyful

little skips of anticipation. It was not long before she returned, a pleased smile on her baby face. "What do you think?" she whispered, gleefully. "She gave me ten dollars! She was lovely, too, and didn't scowl at all. I wished her a Merry Christmas, and she asked me to take luncheon or dinner with her some time after Christmas. Miss Taylor wasn't there."

Grace was on the point of replying humorously that she hoped Arline would not share Elfreda's fate when the hour to dine came round. She checked herself in time, however. She had no right to betray Elfreda's confidence even to Arline. "That was generous in her," she said warmly. "Would you like to come upstairs with me now, Arline, while I collect my share of the contributions? Miriam and Elfreda will soon be here and I will ask Anne for her money."

Arline obediently followed Grace upstairs to her room. Grace lighted the gas. As she did so she espied an envelope lying on the rug near the door. Crossing to where it lay, Grace picked it up. It bore no superscription. She turned it over, then finding it unsealed pulled back the flap and peered into it. With an exclamation of wonder she drew forth a crisp ten dollar bill. "Who do you suppose left it there?" she gasped in amazement. "I thought Anne was here. She must have gone out."

"Look in the envelope. Perhaps there is a card, too," suggested Arline hopefully.

Grace peered into it a second time. Close to the inner surface of the envelope lay a tiny strip of paper. She held it up triumphantly for Arline's inspection.

"Is there any writing on it?" demanded Arline.

Grace scanned the strip of paper earnestly, turned it over and found the faint lead-pencil inscription: "From a friend."

"Who can it be?" pondered Arline. "Do you recognize the hand-writing?"

"No." Grace looked puzzled. It is a welcome gift. Just think, Arline, we have one hundred dollars. Your fifty, and Miss Atkins's ten makes sixty, and this makes seventy. The twenty-five dollars I have and twenty dollars more from the four of us makes one hundred and fifteen dollars. That will mean a great deal to those girls. I only wish it were more."

"If I had known sooner I would not have been so extravagant in buying my Christmas presents," declared Arline regretfully. "There isn't time to write Father for money. I don't like to telegraph. I've been positively reckless with money this month. When I go home I'm going to have a talk with Father. Oh, Grace Harlowe, I've a perfectly lovely idea," she

continued, joyfully clasping her two small hands about Grace's arm, "but I am not going to say a word until I come back to Overton."

"Then I won't ask questions," smiled Grace. "Come, now, help me with these packages. It is eight o'clock and we haven't made a start yet. We had better wrap the presents in two large packages. I will ask Mrs. Elwood for some wrapping paper, and we'll bring the suit case up here."

It was almost nine o'clock when Grace and Arline descended the steps of Wayne Hall with mystery written on their faces. Each girl carried an unwieldy bundle. In the center of Grace's bundle, securely wrapped in fold after fold of tissue paper, was a little box. It contained one hundred and fifteen dollars in bills. Wrapped about the bills was the following note addressed to Esther Barlow, the freshman Grace had encountered that afternoon: "Merry Christmas to yourself and your seven freshmen friends. Santa Claus."

"How can we manage to deliver this stuff without being seen?" demanded Arline. "My arms ache already, and we haven't walked a block."

Grace set down her bundle on a convenient horse block and paused to consider. Arline dropped hers beside it with a sigh of relief. "I

Each Girl Carried an Unwieldy Bundle.

know what we can do," said Grace reflectively. "We can get Mr. Symes to go with us. He is that old man who does errands and takes messages for ever so many of the girls. We will go with him as far as the corner, then he can carry the things to the door and give them to the woman who owns the boarding house. He lives just around the corner from here. You stay here and watch the bundles and I will see if I can find him."

Grace found Mr. Symes at home and quite willing to carry out the final detail of the Christmas plan. The old man was duly sworn to secrecy and entered into the spirit of his errand almost as heartily as did Arline and Grace. At the chosen corner the girls halted, repeated their final instructions, and drawing back into the shadow, left him to deliver the two bulky packages, his wrinkled face wreathed in smiles.

He smiled even more broadly on his return to the watchers, as Grace slipped a crisp green note into his hand and wished him a Merry Christmas.

"Now we ought to do a little celebrating on our own account," she proposed. "Suppose we pay a visit to Vinton's. It isn't too cold for ices."

"That is just what I was thinking," agreed Arline.

An hour later Arline and Grace said good-bye on the corner below Wayne Hall. "I won't see you in the morning at the station, Grace," said Arline regretfully. "My train leaves a whole hour later than yours. I hope you will have a perfectly lovely Christmas. I hope eight other girls will, too. Don't you?"

"You're a dear little Daffydowndilly," smiled Grace as she kissed Arline's upturned face. "I am sure they will, and they have you to thank for their pleasure, though they will never know it."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MRS. GRAY'S CHRISTMAS CHILDREN

"IF this isn't like old times, then nothing ever will be!" exclaimed David Nesbit, beaming on Anne Pierson, who was busy pouring tea for the "Eight Originals" in Mrs. Gray's comfortable library.

"Old times!" exclaimed Hippy Wingate, accepting his teacup with a flourish that threatened to send its contents into the lap of Nora O'Malley, who sat beside him on the big leather davenport. "It takes me back to the days when I had only to lift my hand and say, 'Table, prepare thyself,' and some one of these fair damsels immediately invited me to a banquet. Gone are the days when I waxed fat and prosperous. Now I am thin and pale, a victim of adversity."

"I think you look stouter than ever," declared Nora cruelly. "You say you have lost ten pounds, but—" she shrugged her shoulders significantly.

"Cruel, cruel," moaned Hippy. "It is sad to see such calloused inhumanity in one so young. Pass me the cakes, Anne, the chocolate covered ones. They, at least, will afford me sweet consolation."

"I object," interposed Reddy Brooks. "Don't give him that plate. Hand him one or two, Anne. I like the looks of those cakes, too."

"Man, do you mean to insinuate that I am not what I seem?" demanded Hippy, glaring belligerently at Reddy.

"No, I am stating plainly that you are exactly what you seem. That's why I am looking out for my share of the cakes."

"Always prompted by selfish motives," deplored Hippy. "How thankful I am that the sweet blossom of unselfishness blooms freely in my heart. It is true that I would eat all the cakes on that plate, but from a purely unselfish motive."

"Let's hear the motive," jeered Tom Gray.

"I would eat them all," replied Hippy gently, favoring the company with one of his famously wide smiles, "to save you, my beloved friends, from indigestion. It is better that I should bear your suffering."

"Thank you," retorted David Nesbit dryly, helping himself to the coveted cakes and passing the plate over Hippy's head to Mrs. Gray, "I prefer to do my own suffering."

"Oh, as you like," returned Hippy airily. "I have always been fonder of Mrs. Gray than I can say." He sidled ingratiatingly toward where Mrs. Gray sat, her cheeks pink with the

excitement of having her Christmas children with her.

From the time Grace, Miriam and Anne stepped off the train into the waiting arms of their dear ones, their vacation had been a season of continued rejoicing. Mrs. Gray, who, Tom gravely declared, would celebrate her twenty-fifth birthday next April, was tireless in her efforts to make their brief stay in Oakdale a happy one. On Christmas night she had gathered them in and given them a dinner and a tree. She had also given a luncheon in honor of Anne and a large party on New Year's night. It was now the evening after New Year's and the morning train would take the boys back to college. Grace, Miriam and Anne would leave a day later for Overton. Nora and Jessica were to remain in Oakdale until the following week. It seemed only natural that they should spend their last evening together at the home of their old friend. Outside the "Eight Originals," Miriam had been the only one invited to this last intimate gathering.

"Now, Hippy, stick to the truth," commanded Mrs. Gray, shaking her finger at him, but handing him the plate at the same time. Hippy swooped down upon it with a gurgle of delight.

"It's the truth. I swear it," he declared, holding up one fat hand in which he clutched a cake.

"What made you give him the plate, Aunt Rose?" asked Tom reproachfully.

"Bless you, child, there are plenty of cakes. Let Hippy have as many as he can eat."

"Vindicated," chuckled Hippy, between cakes, "and given full possession besides."

"I wouldn't be so greedy," sniffed Nora O'Malley.

"I'm so glad. I dislike greedy little girls," retorted Hippy patronizingly.

"Stop squabbling," interposed Grace. "Here we are on the eve of separation and yet you two are bickering as energetically as when you first caught sight of each other two weeks ago. Did you ever agree on any subject?"

"Let me see," said Hippy. "Did we, Nora?"

"Never," replied Nora emphatically.

"Then, let's begin now," suggested Hippy hopefully. "If you will agree always to agree with me I will agree—"

"Thank you, but I can't imagine myself as ever being so foolish," interrupted Nora loftily.

"She spoke the truth," said Hippy sadly. "We never can agree. It is better that we should part. Will you think of me, when I am gone? That is the burning question. Will you, won't you, can you, can't you remember me?" He beamed sentimentally on Nora, who beamed on him in return, at the same time making almost

imperceptible signs to Grace to capture the plate of cakes, of which Hippy was still in possession. In his efforts to be impressive, Hippy had, for the moment, forgotten the cakes. But he was not to be caught napping. The instant Grace made a sly movement toward the plate it was whisked from under her fingers.

"Naughty, naughty, mustn't touch!" he exclaimed, eyeing Grace reprovingly.

"Let him alone, girls, and come over here," broke in David Nesbit. "He only does these things to make himself the center of attraction. He wants all the attention."

"Ha," jeered Hippy exultantly. "David thinks that crushing remark will fill me with such overwhelming shame that I shall drop the cakes and retire to a distant corner. He little knows what manner of man I am. I will defend my rights until not a vestige of doubt remains as to who is who in Oakdale."

"There is not a vestige of doubt in my mind as to what will happen in about ten seconds if certain people don't mend their ways," threatened Reddy, rising from his chair, determination in his eye.

"Take the cakes, Grace," entreated Hippy, hastily shoving the plate into Grace's hand. "Nora, protect me. Don't let him get me. Please, mister, I haven't any cakes. I gave

them all to a poor, miserable beggar who—"

"Here, Reddy, you may have them," broke in Grace decisively. "It is bad enough to have an unpleasant duty thrust upon one, but to be called names!"

"I never did, never," protested Hippy. "It was a mere figure of speech. Didn't you ever hear of one?"

"Not that kind, and you can't have the cakes, again," said Jessica firmly. "Give them to me, Grace."

"Jessica always helps Reddy," grumbled Hippy. "Now, if Nora would only stand up for me, we could manage this whole organization with one hand. She is such a splendid fighter—"

"I'll never speak to you again, Hippy Wingate," declared Nora, turning her back on him with a final air of dismissal.

"Gently, gently!" exclaimed Hippy, raising his hand in expostulation. "I was about to say that you, Nora, are a splendid fighter"—he paused significantly—"for the right. What can be more noble than to fight for the right? Now, aren't you sorry you repudiated me? If you will say so immediately I will overlook the other remark. But you must be quick. Time and I won't wait a minute. Remember, I'm going away to-morrow."

"Good-bye," retorted Nora indifferently. "I'll see you again some day."

"'Forsaken, forsaken, forsaken am I,'" wailed Hippy, hopelessly out of tune.

"Now, see what you've done," commented David Nesbit disgustedly.

"I'm truly sorry," apologized Nora. "Hippy, if you will stop singing, I'll forgive you and allow you to sit beside me." She patted the davenport invitingly.

"I thought you would," grinned Hippy, seating himself triumphantly beside her. "I always gain my point by singing that song. It appeals to people. It is so pathetic. They would give worlds to—"

"Have you stop it," supplemented Tom Gray.

"Yes," declared Hippy. "No, I don't mean 'yes' at all. Tom Gray is an unfeeling monster. I refuse to say another word. I have subsided. Now, may I have some more tea?"

Anne filled the stout young man's cup and handed it to him with a smile. "What are you going to be when you grow up, Hippy?" she asked mischievously.

"A brakeman," replied Hippy promptly. "I always did like to ride on trains. That's why I am spending four years in college."

"Don't waste your breath on him, Anne," advised Nora. "He won't tell any one what he

intends to do. I've asked him a hundred times. He knows, too. He really isn't as foolish as he looks."

"I'm going to try for a position in the Department of Forestry at Washington after I get through college," announced Tom Gray.

"I'm going into business with my father," declared Reddy.

"I don't know yet what my work will be," said David Nesbit reflectively.

"All you children will be famous one of these days," predicted Mrs. Gray sagely. She had been listening delightedly to the merry voices of the young people. To her, as well as to his young friends, Hippy was a never-failing source of amusement.

"To choose a profession is easier for boys than for girls," declared Grace. "I haven't the slightest idea what I shall do after my college days are over. Most boys enter college with their minds made up as to what their future work is going to be, but very few girls decide until the last minute."

"Girls whose parents can afford to send them to college don't have to decide, as a rule," said Nora wisely, "but almost every young man thinks about it from the first, no matter how much money his father is worth."

"That is true, my dear," nodded Mrs. Gray.

"Yet I am sure my girls as well as my boys will astonish the world some day. In fact, Anne has already proved her mettle. Nora hopes to become a great singer, Jessica a pianiste and Grace and Miriam—"

"Are still floundering helplessly, trying to discover their respective vocations," supplemented Grace.

"Yes, Mrs. Gray," smiled Miriam, "our future careers are shrouded in mystery."

"Time enough yet," said Mrs. Gray cheerily. "Going to college doesn't necessitate adopting a profession, you know. Perhaps when your college days are over you will find your vocation very near home."

"Perhaps," assented Grace doubtfully, "only I'd like to 'do noble deeds, not dream them all day long,' " she quoted laughingly.

" 'And so make life, death and the vast forever
One grand sweet song,' "

finished Anne softly.

"That is what I shall do when I am a brakeman," declared Hippy confidently.

"You mean you will make life miserable for every one who comes within a mile of you," jeered Reddy Brooks.

"Reddy, how can you thus ruthlessly belittle my tenderest hope, my fondest ambitions? What

do you know about my future career as a brakeman? I intend to be touchingly faithful to my duty, kind and considerate to the public. In time the world will hear of me and I shall be honored and revered."

"Which you never would be at home," put in David sarcastically.

"What great man is ever appreciated in his own country?" questioned Hippy gently.

Even Reddy was obliged to smile at this retort.

"Let the future take care of itself," said Tom Gray lazily. "The night is yet young. Let us do stunts. Grace and Miriam must do their Spanish dance for us. Then it will be Nora's and Jessica's turn. Hippy can sing, nothing sentimental, though. David, Reddy, Hippy and I will then enact for you a stirring drama of metropolitan life entitled 'Oakdale's Great Mystery,' with the eminent actor, Theophilus Hippopotamus Wingate as the 'Mystery.' Let the show begin. We will have the Spanish dance first."

"Come on, Miriam," laughed Grace. "We had better be obliging. Then we shall be admitted to the rest of the performance."

The impromptu "show" that followed was a repetition of the "stunts" for which the various members of the little circle were famous and

which were always performed for Mrs. Gray's pleasure. "Oakdale's Great Mystery," of which Hippy calmly admitted the authorship, proved to be a ridiculous travesty on a melodrama which the boys had seen the previous winter. Hippy as the much-vaunted Mystery, with a handkerchief mask, a sweeping red portiere cloak, and an ultra-mysterious shuffle was received with shrieks of laughter by the audience. The dramatic manner in which, after a series of humorous complications, the Mystery was run to earth and unmasked by "Deadlock Jones, the King of Detectives," was portrayed by David with "startling realism" and elicited loud applause.

"That is the funniest farce you boys have ever given," laughed Mrs. Gray, as Hippy removed his mask with a loud sigh of relief and wiped his perspiring forehead with it. "You will be a playwright some day, Hippy."

"I'd rather be a brakeman," persisted Hippy with his Cheshire cat grin.

It was half-past ten o'clock when the last good night had been said and the young people were on their way home. As the Nesbit residence was so near Mrs. Gray's home, Miriam was escorted to her door by a merry body guard. At Putnam Square the little company halted for a moment before separating, Nora, Jessica, Hippy and

Reddy going in one direction, Grace, Anne, Tom and David in the other.

"Are you coming down to the train to-morrow morning to see us off?" asked David Nesbit, his question including the four girls.

"Of course," replied Grace. "Don't we always see you off on the train whenever you go back to school before we do?"

"Then we'll reserve our sad farewells until the morn," beamed Hippy.

"Sad farewells!" exclaimed Nora scornfully. "I never yet saw you look sad over saying goodbye to us. You always smile at the last minute as though you were going to a picnic."

" 'Tis only to hide my sorrow, my child," returned Hippy lugubriously. "Would'st have the whole town look upon my tears and jeer, 'cry baby'?"

"That's a very good excuse," sniffed Nora.

"Not an excuse," corrected Hippy, "but a cloak to hide my real feelings."

"That will do, Hippopotamus," cut in David decisively. "We don't wish to hear the whys and wherefores of your feelings. If we stayed to listen to them we would be here on this very spot when our train leaves to-morrow morning."

"Wait until we come back for Easter, Hippy, then if you begin the first day you're home you'll

finish before we go back to college," suggested Grace.

"That's a good idea," declared Hippy joyfully. "I shall remember it, and look forward to the Easter vacation."

"I shan't come home for Easter, then," decided Nora mercilessly.

"Then I shan't look forward to anything," replied Hippy with such earnestness that even scornful Nora forgot to retort sharply.

"We all hope to be together again at Easter," said Grace, looking affectionately from one to the other of the little group. "Remember, every one, your good resolution about letters."

"We'll talk about that in the morning," laughed Reddy, who abhorred letter writing.

"You mean you'll forget about it," said Jessica significantly.

"We all have our faults," mourned Hippy. "Now, as for myself—"

"Take him away, Nora," begged David.

"I will," agreed Nora. "Come on, Hippy. Reddy, you and Jessica help me tear him away from this corner."

"How can you tear me away now? At the precise moment when I had begun to enjoy myself, too?" reproached Hippy.

"This is only the beginning," was Reddy's threatening answer. "We are going to leave

you stranded on the next corner. Then you can go on enjoying yourself alone."

"Try it," dared Hippy. "If you do I shall lift up my voice and tell everyone in this block how unfeeling and hard-hearted some persons are. I shall mention names in my most stentorian tones and the public will rush forth from their houses to hear the truth about you. Ah, here is the corner! Now, leave me at your peril."

"His mind is wandering," said Reddy sadly. "He imagines he is still 'Oakdale's Great Mystery.' We had better lead him home. I'll take his left arm, and Nora——"

"Will take my right," interrupted Hippy. "Reddy, you may attend to your own affairs, and keep your distance from my left arm. Jessica, please look after Reddy. His mind is wandering. In fact, it always has wandered. Crazy is as crazy does, you know."

"Yes, we know," flung back David significantly.

"Do you?" asked Hippy in apparent innocence. "I was so afraid you didn't. To lose one's mind is a dreadful affliction, but not to know that one is crazy is even worse. I am so relieved, David, Grace, Tom, and all of you, that at last you know the truth concerning yourselves. It is indeed a sad——"

A moment later the loquacious Hippy was hustled down the street by three determined young people, while the other four turned their steps in the opposite direction.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ARLINE'S PLAN

"IT was beautiful to be at home, but it is nice to be here, too. If it wasn't for mid year exams., I could be happy," sighed Grace Harlowe, as she rearranged three new sofa pillows she had brought from home, the gifts of Oakdale friends. Grace and Anne had invited Arline Thayer and Ruth Denton to dinner, and Miriam and Elfreda had dropped in for a brief chat before the dinner bell rang.

"We'll all survive even mid year," predicted Miriam confidently.

"We had a perfectly lovely time in New York, didn't we, Arline?" asked Ruth Denton, looking at the little curly-haired girl with fond eyes.

Arline nodded. "I wish our vacation had been two weeks longer," she remarked wistfully. "I just begin to get acquainted with Father, when it is time to go back to college again. Have you seen many of the girls?"

"Only the Morton House girls and you," answered Arline. "This is the first call I've made outside the house. Are all the Wayne Hall girls here?"

"Miss Taylor hasn't come back yet," said El-

freda. "Do you girls happen to know where she spent her vacation?"

"No," said Grace. "I didn't see her before I left. When first she came to Wayne Hall she seemed to like me. At the sophomore reception I hurt her feelings, unintentionally you may be sure. I am afraid she has never forgiven me, for since then she has avoided me."

"She must have very sensitive feelings," remarked Elfreda bluntly. "What did you do to hurt them?"

"I missed asking her to dance," explained Grace. "I didn't see her until late that evening, and when I apologized and asked to see her card she refused, saying coldly that my forgetting to ask her to dance was of no consequence. Since then she has hardly spoken to me."

"Why didn't you tell me that before?" asked Elfreda quickly. "That accounts for certain things."

"Don't be mysterious, Elfreda," put in Miriam. "Tell us what you mean by 'certain things'?"

"You girls know that on several occasions before Christmas Alberta Wicks and Mary Hampton were invited here to dinner. Who invited them? Miss Taylor. So Alberta Wicks retaliated by taking Miss Taylor home with her for the holidays."

"Really?" asked Miriam, in surprise. "Who told you?"

"They went home on the same train with Emma Dean," returned Elfreda. "She sat two seats behind them. Has any one seen the Anarchist?"

No one answered.

"Why don't we change the subject and talk about something pleasant," complained Arline Thayer.

"Do you remember saying to me the night before we went home that you had thought of a lovely plan?" reminded Grace.

"Yes," returned Arline. "I am glad you reminded me of it while we are all here. Just before I went home for my vacation the idea popped into my head that we ought to organize some kind of society for helping these girls who come to Overton with little or no money and who depend on the work they find to do here to help them through college."

"Like me," put in Ruth slyly.

"Don't interrupt me," retorted Arline, smiling at Ruth. "When I went home I had a talk with Father, and he has promised to give me five hundred dollars with which to start a fund. Now, what I propose to do is to organize a little society of our own with this same object in view. There is one society of that kind here at Over-

ton, but it is always so besieged with requests for help that I don't imagine it more than keeps its head above water. There is room for another, at any rate. I don't see why we can't be the girls to organize it." Arline looked questioningly about the circle of interested faces.

"I think it would be splendid," said Miriam emphatically. "I know my mother would contribute toward it."

"So would Pa and Ma," declared Elfreda. "Suppose we all write home tonight."

"What do you think of it, Grace and Anne?" asked Arline. "So far neither of you has said a word."

"Neither has Ruth made any remarks," replied Anne. "Why don't you ask her? I think she has something to say on the subject."

All eyes were immediately turned on Ruth, who flushed, looked almost distressed, then said slowly, "Could the girls who asked for help borrow the money and return it as soon as they were able?"

"Of course," responded Arline. "Don't be afraid that you are going to have charity thrust upon you, Ruth."

"That would be the only basis on which we could establish a society of that kind," commented Miriam. "An Overton girl would hesitate to make use of the money except as a loan."

"What would we call ourselves?" asked Elfreda abruptly.

"We can decide on a name later," said Arline. "The thing to decide now is, shall we or shall we not form this society? Answer yes or no?"

"Yes," was the chorus.

"Don't you think," said Grace after a slight deliberation, "that it would be nicer if we could finance this society ourselves, instead of asking our fathers and mothers for money? It isn't any particular effort for most of us to write home for money. How much better it would be if we could say that we had earned the money ourselves, or saved it from our allowances."

"But what about my five hundred dollars?" questioned Arline plaintively. "As the originator of this scheme I claim the privilege of putting in as much capital as I please. I am going to be the exception that proves the rule. Besides, Father has already promised me the money. Take the five hundred dollars for the basis of our fund, then we will pledge ourselves hereafter to earn or contribute whatever money we put into it."

"What do you say to that, girls?" asked Grace.

"I think Arline ought to be allowed to give the five hundred dollars if she wishes," said Mi-

riam. "It is her money and her plan. Besides, we need the money!"

"I think so, too," echoed Elfreda. "We might call the society the 'Arline Thayer Club.'"

"If you dare—" began Arline.

"Save your breath, my child, I didn't mean that seriously," drawled Elfreda. "However, we had better begin our society here, to-night. There are six of us. Shall we add to our number or let well enough alone?"

"I'd like to have Gertrude Wells in it," said Arline. "Shall we make it strictly a sophomore affair?"

"I think it would be better," replied Grace.

"Then let us ask Emma Dean, Elizabeth Wade, Marian Cummings and Elsie Wilton," pursued Arline.

"Seven, eight, nine, ten," counted Anne.

"Let us make it a dozen," suggested Miriam.

"Then who shall the other two members be?"

"Why not ask the Emerson Twins?" suggested Arline. "They would be good material, and they are both splendid on committees. Julia Emerson nearly worked her head off for the sophomore reception last fall."

"Very well, we will ask them," agreed Grace. "In case any one of the girls we have named but haven't yet interviewed should not wish to be-

long to our society we can propose some one else to take her place. In the meantime you must each be thinking of a name for our little club. We can meet in the library after the last class tomorrow afternoon, and go from there to Vinton's to talk it over. Arline, you must tell Gertrude Wells, Elizabeth Wade and Marian Cummings. We can easily see the others."

"The dinner bell! Thank goodness!" exclaimed Elfreda fervently. "I am almost starved. I hope dinner will be better than last night's offering. Everything we had to eat was warranted to fatten one."

"Never mind, Elfreda," consoled Arline. "Think how nice it will be when you make the team. That will be a reward worth having."

"Yes, if I make it," grumbled the stout girl.

"We will go on with our new plan after dinner," said Grace. Then as an afterthought she added: "Don't say anything about it at the table. Suppose we keep it a secret until our society is in running order?"

"Hello, children," greeted Emma Dean, as they entered the dining room that night. "Has the board of directors been holding a meeting? I see you are all here."

Several girls already seated at the table looked up smilingly as the six girls slipped into their places. Laura Atkins returned Arline's

friendly nod with a cold bow. She did not appear to see the others. During the progress of the meal she said little, keeping up a pretense of indifference as to what went on around her. Nevertheless her eyes strayed more than once toward the end of the table where Elfreda was entertaining the girls sitting nearest to her with a ludicrous account of what had happened to her on her way back to Overton. Miriam accidentally intercepted one of these straying glances. In it she fancied she read reproach. A quick flush rose to Laura Atkins's cheeks. Drawing down her eyebrows she scowled defiantly at Miriam, then turned her head away, and went on with her dinner.

After dinner the discussion of the proposed club was renewed with energy. Emma Dean's innocent allusion at dinner to the meeting of the board of directors had brought smiles to the faces of the six girls. After they had again gathered in Grace's room, Elfreda was despatched to Emma's room with orders to bring her to the council, no matter what her engagements or obligations might be.

"I knew something was going to happen," was Emma's calm announcement as she followed Elfreda into the room. "To quote my esteemed friend, Miss Briggs, 'I could see' it in your eyes at dinner. I have a theme to write, a

dressmaker to see, and four letters to answer, but, still, I am here."

"We can readily understand how deeply it must have grieved you to shun the dressmaker, put off writing your theme, and tear yourself away from your correspondence," sympathized Miriam Nesbit, her eyes twinkling.

"Then, as long as you understand it, we won't say anything more about it," was Emma's hasty reply. "I move that we avoid personalities and proceed to business."

## CHAPTER XX

### A WELCOME GUEST

THE meeting in the library the next day, followed by a social session at Vinton's, resulted in the enthusiastic organization of the society proposed by Grace. As had been suggested, every girl had brought with her a slip of paper on which was written the name she had selected for the society. Arline collected the names and read each one in turn to the assembled girls.

"Which one do you like best?" she asked, looking from one to another of her friends.

"The first one," said Miriam Nesbit.

"So do I," echoed half a dozen voices.

"'Semper Fidelis,'" repeated Grace musingly. "I like the sound of that, too. Who proposed that name?"

"I did," admitted Emma Dean. "I thought it might stand for our motto as well. It means 'always faithful,' you know. That applies to us, doesn't it?"

"Of course we shall be always faithful to our cause," declared Grace. "All those in favor of the name Semper Fidelis, please manifest it by holding up their right hands."

Twelve right hands were raised simultaneously.

"That settles it," stated Grace. "From now on we are the Semper Fidelis girls. Let us lose no time in leaving the sacred precincts of the library for Vinton's. We can make more noise there."

After the second sundae all around had been disposed of the society settled down to business. It was decided that the club should be a purely social affair. Arline was chosen for president, Grace for vice-president and Gertrude Wells as secretary and treasurer. There was to be no special day set aside for meetings. A meeting might be called at any time at the united request of three members. The sole object of the club was to extend a helping hand to the young women who were making praiseworthy efforts to put themselves through college. The foremost duty of the society would be to ascertain the names of these girls and offer them pecuniary assistance. Arline had written her father for the promised check for five hundred dollars, which would be deposited in the bank in Gertrude Wells's name as soon as it arrived.

"I might as well tell you now that I wrote and asked Pa for a check in spite of what Grace said," confessed Elfreda rather sheepishly.

"I might as well confess that I mentioned the

club idea to Mother," said Miriam. "I didn't ask her for a check, but I wouldn't be astonished if she sent one in her next letter."

"You two girls are traitors to the cause," laughed Grace. "Perhaps you will be disappointed."

"I won't," asserted Elfreda boldly. "Pa might as well help us as any one else. I told him so, too."

"The important question is what can we do to earn money for our cause?" asked Grace.

"We might give a play," said Miriam Nesbit. "Anne can star in it. I should like to have the Overton girls see her at her best."

"I don't wish to be seen 'at my best,'" protested Anne. "I want the other girls to have a chance, too. Why not give a vaudeville show? Grace and Miriam can dance. Elfreda can give imitations. There are plenty of things we can do. We will advertise the show in all the campus houses, and each one of us must pledge ourselves to sell a certain number of tickets. I think we would be allowed to use Music Hall for the show, and if we could sell tickets enough to fill it, even comfortably, it would mean quite a sum of money for our treasury. We might charge fifty cents for admittance, or, if you think that is too much, we might put the price down to twenty-five cents."

"I think we had better charge fifty cents," said Elfreda shrewdly. "It will be as easy for those who come to pay fifty cents as to pay twenty-five. We might as well have the other quarter as Vinton's or Martell's."

"Elfreda, you are a brilliant and valuable addition to this society," commended Arline. "I agree with you. We are likely to reap almost as many half dollars as quarters."

"We might give an act from one of Shakespeare's plays," remarked Gertrude Wells doubtfully. "Still, I think it would be more fun to have just stunts. Those of us who know any ought to be willing to come forward and do them. We can ask some of the upper class girls to help. Beatrice Alden sings; so does Frances Marlton. Mabel Ashe can do almost any kind of fancy dancing. There is plenty of talent in college. The junior glee club will sing for us, I am sure.

"We can make it a regular vaudeville entertainment, and have posters announcing each number. We can have two girls, costumed as pages, to bring out and remove the posters announcing the numbers."

"That's a good idea," approved Arline. "I can sing baby and little-girl songs and dance a little. I might sing one to fill in."

"You are engaged to sing one the first time

you come to see me," laughed Grace. "Here is talent of which we never dreamed. I knew you could sing, but you never before confessed to being a real song and dance artist."

"We shall have all 'headliners in our show,' as the billboard advertisements beautifully put it," commented Miriam. "I wish Eleanor were here, don't you, Grace? Then Anne could recite 'Enoch Arden.'"

"Who is Eleanor, and why can't Anne recite 'Enoch Arden' without her?" were Elsie Wilton's curious inquiries.

"The 'Eleanor' we speak of is in Italy, studying music, or was the last time we heard from her. She used to live in Oakdale and is one of our dearest friends. She arranged music to be played during Anne's recital of 'Enoch Arden.' They gave it at a concert at home and it was a tremendous success."

"I wish she were to be here to our show, then," said Arline plaintively. "We would feature her. What's her other name?"

"Savelli," replied Grace quickly.

"Eleanor Savelli, the famous Italian pianiste," announced Arline, bowing to an imaginary audience. "Her name is the same as that of Savelli, the great virtuoso, isn't it?"

"He is her father," said Grace simply.

A little murmur of astonishment went up.

"Oh, if she had only come to Overton instead of going to Italy!" sighed Elizabeth Wade. "I heard Savelli play at a concert three years ago. I shall never forget him."

"We were awfully disappointed," interposed Miriam. "Eleanor's father was to tour America this winter, but changed his mind. There was talk of a spring tour, but we haven't heard from Eleanor for over a month, so we don't know whether there is any possibility of his sailing for America. If he did come to this country, Eleanor would be sure to accompany him. She has promised us that."

"There is no use in wishing for the impossible, children," said Emma Dean briskly, rising from the table and beginning to put on her coat. There is also no use in being late for dinner. In spite of this bounteous repast," she indicated the empty sundae glasses, "I yearn for Mrs. Elwood's simple but infinitely more satisfying fare. It's almost six o'clock. Those that are going with me, hurry up."

"We must have another meeting within the next two or three days," declared Grace. "Can all of you girls come to our room next Friday evening? In the meantime we will arrange a programme which will be brought before the club for approval at our next meeting. Don't any of you fail to be there."

As the Wayne Hall girls flocked in the front door that night, Mrs. Elwood met them with: "Miss Harlowe, there is a young lady in the living room, waiting for you. She's been there almost an hour."

"For me?" inquired Grace in surprise. "I'll go in at once."

An instant later the girls heard a delighted little cry of "Eleanor, you dear thing!" Then Grace sprang to the door, exclaiming: "Girls, girls! come in here at once. You can never guess who is here!"

At the cry of "Eleanor," Miriam and Anne, who were half way upstairs, ran down again and into the living room. They were followed by Elfreda, who paused on the stairs, then turned and went slowly up to her room. "Last year I wouldn't have known enough to go on about my business," she muttered as she walked stolidly into her room and sat down on the end of the couch.

Ten minutes later Miriam burst into the room with: "Come downstairs, Elfreda. Don't you want to meet Eleanor? You know you have said so ever so many times. She's very anxious to meet you."

"Of course I want to meet her," returned Elfreda with a short, embarrassed laugh. "This room is the place for me, though, until you are

ready to introduce me. Are you sure you want me to go downstairs?"

"You funny girl," laughed Miriam. "Of course we want you. We have just been telling Eleanor about you. She hasn't time to come upstairs now, for her father is waiting for her at the 'Tourraine.' He is going back to New York City to-night. He has a concert to-morrow. Grace, Anne and I are going to dine with them. I'm sorry I can't take you along, but perhaps he will come again to Overton. Eleanor is going to stay a week longer if we can coax her to remain. She is traveling with her father. We must hurry downstairs, for Eleanor is to meet her father at half-past six o'clock, and it is a quarter-past now."

Elfreda shook hands with Eleanor almost timidly. She was deeply impressed with the latter's exquisite beauty.

"So this is Elfreda," smiled Eleanor, patting the stout girl's hand. "I have learned to know you through the letters my friends have written me. I feel as though you were an old friend."

"It's awfully nice in you to say so," murmured Elfreda, her eyes shining with pleasure.

"Won't you go with us to the 'Tourraine'?" asked Eleanor sweetly. "I would like to have you meet my father."

"Thank you," almost gasped Elfreda. "I'd love to meet him, but I think—"

"Never mind thinking," interrupted Eleanor, gayly. "Just hurry into your wraps and come along. We'll wait for you."

"That's sweet in you, Eleanor," said Grace in a low tone as Elfreda ran upstairs. "She was wild to go with us. She has worshipped you ever since we showed her your picture. She has heard your father play, too, and considers him the greatest violinist living."

"I suspected she wished to be included in the invitation," smiled Eleanor. "I imagine I am going to like her very much."

Guido Savelli had engaged a private dining room at the "Tourraine" for his young guests. He welcomed them with true Latin enthusiasm, and to see him seated at the head of the table one would never have suspected him to be the moody, temperamental genius whose playing had made him famous in two continents. When the time came to leave the hotel for the train he was escorted to the station by an admiring bodyguard of five young women.

"Remember, you have promised to visit Overton again before you leave New York," reminded Grace as he walked down the station platform between Grace and Eleanor.

"He will," declared Eleanor. "I shall make

him come back to Overton for me. Good-bye, Father. Take care of yourself. Remember to go for your walk every day, won't you? He's the nicest father," she said softly as the little group turned to leave the station after the train had gone. "Now take me to your house and let us have an old-fashioned gossip. I have so much to tell you, and I want to hear about Overton."

A happy party gathered in Grace's room that night for an old-time talk about Oakdale. Elfreda was the only outsider present. For her benefit the story of the stolen class money and its timely recovery by Grace and Eleanor, as related in "Grace Harlowe's Senior Year at High School," was retold, as well as many other eventful happenings of their high school life. At a quarter to ten o'clock the four girls escorted Eleanor to the "Tourraine," returning just inside the half-past ten o'clock limit.

"Well, what do you think of Eleanor, Elfreda?" asked Grace, stopping for a moment outside the room shared by Miriam and Elfreda before going to her own.

"Don't ask me," rejoined Elfreda fervently. "I can't thank you girls enough for the good time I've had tonight. But I want to say that if there is anything I can do for any of you, just count on J. Elfreda Briggs to do it."

"It isn't necessary for you to tell us that, Elfreda," said Anne. "We know that you are true blue, and so does Eleanor."

"Does she really like me?" asked Elfreda eagerly.

"She likes you very much," interposed Grace. "She said so."

"Then I'm going to give a luncheon for her to-morrow afternoon at Vinton's," declared Elfreda with shining eyes. "I wanted to suggest it, to-night, but I was afraid she might not care to come."

"Couldn't you 'see' that she liked you?" teased Miriam.

"No, I couldn't. There are lots of things I can't 'see.' One of them is why you girls ever went to so much trouble to make me 'see.' Good night." Casting one glance of love and loyalty toward her friends, Elfreda vanished into her room, and wise Miriam took care not to enter the room until the stout girl's moment of self-communion had passed.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A GIFT TO SEMPER FIDELIS

WHEN the news was whispered about through Overton College that the attractive young woman who was frequently seen in company with Grace Harlowe and her friends was the daughter of Guido Savelli, the renowned virtuoso, it created a wide ripple of excitement among the four classes. Curious juniors and dignified seniors grew interested, and Mabel Ashe and Frances Marlton, who were Eleanor's sworn cavaliers, were besieged with requests for introductions. Far from being spoiled by so much adulation, Eleanor laughingly attributed it to her father's genius, and flouted the idea that her own delightful personality had made her a reigning favorite during her stay in Overton.

It took Grace some time to recover from the surprise occasioned by Eleanor's unexpected arrival. During the month in which she had received no letter from Eleanor, Guido Savelli had reconsidered his decision not to appear in America and instead of canceling his contract had sailed at the eleventh hour to fulfill it, taking Eleanor with him.

"You arrived just in time for our show!" exclaimed Grace gleefully to Eleanor. The two girls sat opposite each other at the library table in the living room at Wayne Hall, making up the programme for the vaudeville performance which was to be held in Music Hall on the following Friday evening. "Oh, Eleanor, don't you think you can go home with me for Easter? Never mind if 'Heartsease' is closed. You can have just as much fun at our house. We have only one more week here, you know, and your father's concert tour doesn't end for another month," pleaded Grace.

"I think I can arrange it," reflected Eleanor. "It is only that Father misses me so. In some ways he is like an overgrown child. All great musicians are like that, I believe."

"It is a pity to take you away from him," admitted Grace, "but we would like to have you with us. Besides, Tom Gray is going to bring Donald Earle to Oakdale with him for the Easter. Donald will be so disappointed if he doesn't see you, Eleanor."

"I'd like to see him, too," returned Eleanor frankly. "He is one of the nicest young men I know. Father is coming down here for our show, unless something unforeseen happens. I shall coax him to play. I imagine he will be willing. He will play if you ask him, Grace."

"I wish we might feature him on the bulletin board," reflected Grace, with a managerial eye to business, "but he wouldn't like that. We could have him for a surprise, though."

"I'll tell you what I will do," volunteered Eleanor. "I will telephone to his hotel in New York and ask him. If he says yes, we can go ahead and count on him to furnish Overton with a surprise."

"Oh, Eleanor, could you, would you do it?" asked Grace, a note of excitement in her voice.

"I'll telephone at once," nodded Eleanor, rising. "Suppose we go over to the 'Tourraine' to do it."

Within the next hour Eleanor and Grace had talked with Guido Savelli. It had taken very little coaxing to secure his promise to play at Overton on Friday night, as he gave his last performance in New York on Thursday evening, and was free until the following Monday, when he would appear in Boston.

"It seems almost providential, doesn't it?" asked Eleanor, as she hung up the receiver. "He could not have come here at any other time."

"I'm so happy over it I could hurrah," declared Grace jubilantly.

"I knew Father would not refuse us," smiled Eleanor. "Now hadn't we better hurry home and make up the rest of the programme?"

By eight o'clock Friday evening every available foot of space in Music Hall was crowded with Overton students. The front rows of the hall had been reserved for the faculty, who were quite in sympathy with the idea of the new club. In order to obtain permission to use this hall, Grace had gone to the dean with the story of the organization of Semper Fidelis and its purpose. The dean had sympathized heartily with the movement, and had at once laid the matter before the president of the college, who willingly gave the desired permission.

As the Semper Fidelis Club was composed entirely of sophomores, twelve young women of the sophomore class had been detailed as ushers and ticket takers. The majority of the club members were down on the programme, therefore these duties had been turned over to their classmates. Grace, besides appearing in the Spanish dance with Miriam, had taken upon herself the duties of stage manager. The two smallest sophomores in the class, dressed as pages, had been chosen to place the posters announcing the various numbers on the standards at each side of the stage. These posters had been designed and painted by Beatrice Alden and Frances Marlton, who, with Mabel Ashe, Constance Fuller and several other public-spirited seniors, had generously offered their services. As

both Beatrice and Frances possessed considerable skill with the brush they turned out extremely decorative posters, which were afterward sold to various admiring students for souvenirs of the club's first entertainment.

"I am so tired," declared Grace to Eleanor as they stood at one side of the stage while the Glee Club, composed of juniors and seniors, arranged themselves preparatory to filing on to the stage. "Everything seems to be going beautifully though. Not a single performer has disappointed us. How pretty the Glee Club girls look to-night."

"Lovely," agreed Eleanor. "The audience is out in its best bib and tucker, too. Nearly every girl in the house is in evening dress."

"Consider the occasion," laughed Grace. "Our show would not have amounted to much if it had not been for you and your distinguished father. Anne could not have recited 'Enoch Arden,' without your accompaniment, and the crowning glory of having the great Savelli play would have been missing. It reminds me of our concert, Eleanor," she added softly.

Eleanor's blue eyes met Grace's gray ones with ineffable tenderness. "The concert that brought me my father," she murmured. "It seems ages since that night, Grace. I can't realize that I have ever been away from Father."

"It does seem a long time since our senior year in high school," agreed Grace musingly. "Good gracious, Eleanor, the Glee Club are waiting for the signal to go on while we stand here reminiscing!" Grace hurried to the wing where one of the pages stood patiently holding the Glee Club poster, and signaled to the page on the opposite side. An instant later the singers had filed on the stage for their opening song.

As the show progressed the audience became more enthusiastic and clamored loudly for encores. Elfreda's imitations provoked continuous laughter, and dainty Arline Thayer, looking not more than seven years old, was a delightful success from her first babyish lisp. Her song of the goblin man who stole little children to work for him in his underground cellar, with its catchy chorus of "Run away, you little children," was immediately adopted by Overton, and when later it was noised about that Ruth had written the words while Arline had composed the music, both girls were later rushed by the Dramatic Club and made members, an honor to which unassuming Ruth had some difficulty in becoming accustomed.

Anne's "Enoch Arden," to Eleanor's piano accompaniment, met with an ovation. Guido Savelli had been purposely placed last on the programme. "No one will care for anything

else after he plays. The audience will have the memory of his music to take away with them," Grace had said wisely. Knowing the musician's horror of being lionized, Grace had confided the secret to no one except Miriam, Anne, Mabel Ashe and Elfreda, who, in company with her and Eleanor, had met him at the train and dined with him at the "Tourraine." It had been arranged that at half-past nine o'clock Anne and Elfreda should go for him and escort him to Music Hall.

At precisely ten minutes past ten o'clock he was escorted through the side entrance to the hall by his two smiling guides, and into the little room just off the stage that did duty for a green room. Eleanor's quick exclamation of, "You have plenty of time, Father, there are two more numbers before yours," caused the various performers to open their eyes, and when Eleanor turned to those in the room, saying sweetly, "Girls, this is my father. He is going to play for us," astonishment looked out from every face.

In order that the surprise might be complete, Grace had purposely withheld until the last moment the posters bearing Guido Savelli's name. When the two pages placed them up on their respective standards, a positive sigh of astonishment went up from the audience that changed to vociferous applause as Eleanor appeared and

took her place at the piano. A second later the great Savelli walked on the stage, violin in hand. Eleanor, having frequently accompanied him on the piano in private, had begged to be allowed for once to accompany him in public.

As the delighted audience listened to the music of the man whose playing had won for him the homage of two continents, they realized that they had been granted an unusual privilege.

"How did he happen to stray into Overton?" "I supposed great artists like him never condescended to play outside of the large cities," were the whispered comments.

One stately old gentleman in particular, who had been the guest of the president at dinner, and who sat beside him during the performance, grew enthusiastically curious, asking all sorts of questions. Who had planned and managed the entertainment? What was the object of the "Semper Fidelis Club"? How long had it been in existence? Who had been on familiar enough terms with Savelli to induce him to play at the "show"? The president answered his questions with becoming patience, promising to introduce him to Grace Harlowe and Arline Thayer, who, he stated, had been responsible for the organization of the club.

Later, the curious old gentleman was presented to Grace and Arline, who answered his

flow of inquiries so courteously and with such apparent good will that he left the hall, smiling to himself as though he had gained possession of some wonderful bit of information.

The vaudeville show netted the Semper Fidelis Club two hundred dollars, which Arline deposited in the bank the following morning.

"'Every little bit helps,'" chuckled Arline as she opened the bank book and pointed to the new entry. She and Grace were on their way from the bank.

"I should say it did," returned Grace warmly. "I only wish we could always make money as easily and pleasantly as we made that two hundred dollars."

"It was lots of fun, wasn't it?" declared Arline happily. "When we come back next fall as juniors we can give another show and add to our fund. We won't have time this year. We are all going home next week and after Easter it will be too late in the year to bother with entertainments."

"We might give a carnival in the gymnasium next fall," suggested Grace. "We had a bazaar at home and made over five hundred dollars. If we gave it early in the fall we would have as much as a thousand dollars on hand to lend where it was needed. I imagine we can find plenty of places for it."

"We can be thinking about it through the summer," planned Arline.

That night when Grace reached Wayne Hall she found a letter bearing her address in the bulletin board at the foot of the stairs. After glancing curiously at the superscription, Grace tore it open and read:

"To Miss Grace Harlowe,
"Wayne Hall,
"Overton.

"My Dear Miss Harlowe:

"I am enclosing a check made payable to you, which I should like you to accept in behalf of the Semper Fidelis Club. I am greatly interested in your association and wish to say that at this time each year as long as the club exists I pledge myself to contribute the same amount of money. Trusting that the club will continue to thrive and prosper,

"Yours very truly,
"Thomas Redfield."

Grace lay down the letter and stared at the check with incredulous eyes. It was for one thousand dollars.

It took but an instant to dart down the hall to Miriam's room, where Anne had just gone to borrow Miriam's Thesaurus.

"Look, look!" cried Grace, holding the check before Anne's astonished eyes.

Miriam rose from her chair and peered over Anne's shoulder. "Three cheers for Mr. Redfield!" she exclaimed. Three cheers for the fairy godfather of Semper Fidelis!

## CHAPTER XXII

### CAMPUS CONFIDENCES

AFTER the Easter vacation there seemed very little left of the college year. Spring overtook the Overton girls unawares, and golf, tennis, Saturday afternoon picnics and walking tours crowded even basketball off their schedule. It was delightful just to stroll about the fast-greening campus arm in arm with one's best friend under the smiling blue of an April sky. It was ideal weather for planning for the future, but it was anything but conducive to study.

"It's a good thing we work like mad in the winter," grumbled Elfreda Briggs, giving her Horace a vindictive little shove that sent it sliding to the floor. "I can't remember anything now, except that the grass is green, the sky is blue—"

"Sugar is sweet, and so are you," supplemented Miriam Nesbit slyly.

"That wasn't what I was going to say at all," retorted Elfreda reprovingly.

"Then I beg your pardon," returned Miriam, with mock contrition. "What were you going to say?"

"Nothing much," grinned Elfreda, "except that I was weighed to-day and I've lost five pounds. I am down to one hundred and forty-five pounds now. If I can lose five pounds more this summer I shall be in fine condition for basketball next fall."

"You did splendid work on the sub team this year," replied Miriam warmly. "I am sure that you will make the regular team next fall."

"The upper class girls say they have very little time for basketball," mused Elfreda. "All kinds of other stunts crowd it out. I'm not going to be like that, though. I love to play and I shall manage to find time for it."

"Where is Grace to-night?" asked Elfreda. "I didn't see her at dinner."

"She had a dinner engagement with Mabel Ashe."

"Vinton's?" asked Elfreda.

Miriam nodded.

"Grace is lucky," sighed Elfreda. "She is always being invited to something or other. Her dinner partners always materialize, too," she added ruefully.

"Which is more than can be said of some of yours," laughed Miriam. "Strange you never found out about that, isn't it?"

It was Elfreda's turn to nod. "I have often thought I would go to Miss Atkins and ask her

why she left me to languish dinnerless in my room after inviting me to eat, drink and be merry," mused Elfreda. "I hate to go home with the mystery unsolved. I believe I will go ask her now," she declared, with sudden energy. "I know she's alone, for the Enigma isn't there to-night." Elfreda had recently bestowed this title upon Mildred Taylor on account of her inexplicable attitude toward Grace.

"I have been disappointed in little Miss Taylor," remarked Miriam slowly. "I was so sure that she would prove another Arline Thayer. She had the same fascinating little ways and at first she seemed so genuinely frank and straightforward."

"I wonder what made her change so suddenly," said Elfreda, walking to the door, "and toward Grace, especially. She doesn't speak to Grace when she meets her. She is an Enigma and no mistake. Now for our friend the Anarchist. If I don't come back within a reasonable length of time you will know that I have been annihilated."

Ten minutes went by, then ten more. At the end of half an hour Miriam wondered slightly at her roommate's continued absence. Just before time for the dinner bell to ring, Elfreda burst into the room with: "Miriam, will you help me to dress? I am invited to dinner and this time

I'm going. The An— Miss Atkins has forgiven me, peace has been restored and we are going out to dine, arm in arm." Elfreda pranced jubilantly about the room, then flinging open the door of the wardrobe brought forth two large boxes that had come by express the day before, one of them containing her new spring hat, the other a smart suit of natural pongee.

"Stop hurrying for a minute and give me a true and faithful account of this miracle," demanded Miriam. "I had begun to think the worst had happened. What did you say first, and what did she say?"

"The door of her room stood partly open and I knocked on it, then marched in without an invitation," replied Elfreda. "She was so surprised she forgot to be angry, and before she had time to remember that she didn't like me I surprised her still further by asking her to tell me why she had refused to speak to me for so long. Before she knew it she had stammered something about Grace and I calling her names and making fun of her behind her back when she had asked me in all good faith to have dinner with her at Vinton's. She declared she had heard us.

"The instant she said that I remembered that I had mimicked her that night while dressing and that Grace had laughed, but had said in the

The Two Boxes Contained Elfreda's New Suit and Hat.

same breath that it wasn't fair. So I asked her point blank if that was what she meant, and she said 'yes,' only she hadn't waited long enough to hear what Grace had said about unfairness. She had come to the door just in time to hear me mimic her, and had rushed back to her room angry and hurt. Then I explained to her that I had a bad trick of imitating even my friends, and that I had offended more than one person by my thoughtlessness. I was really dreadfully sorry and asked her to forgive me. She had half a mind not to do it, then she relented, smiled a little and actually offered me her hand. Of course, after that I stayed a few minutes to talk things over with her and she proposed going to dinner. She is changed. In just what way I can't explain, except that she is more gentle and not quite so prim. Will you look in the top drawer of the chiffonier and see if I put my gold beads in that green box? You know the one I mean."

Miriam obediently opened the drawer and taking the beads from the box deftly fastened them about Elfreda's neck. "Grace will be glad to hear of this," she remarked. "May I tell her and Anne?"

"Yes," returned Elfreda, "but please don't tell any one else." Pinning on her new hat she hurried off to keep her long-delayed engage-

ment with the now thoroughly pacified Anarchist.

When the dinner bell rang, Miriam suddenly remembered that of the four friends she was the only stay-at-home that night. Anne had gone to take supper and spend the evening with Ruth Denton. As she took her seat at the table she noted that Emma Dean's and Mildred Taylor's places were also vacant.

"Where is everyone to-night?" asked Irene Evans, who sat opposite Miriam.

"Grace, Anne and Elfreda were all invited out this evening," answered Miriam. "I don't know anything about Miss Dean and Miss Taylor."

"Emma is spending the evening with her cousin, that other Miss Dean of Ralston House," replied Irene. "Miss Taylor," she shrugged her shoulders slightly, "is with Miss Wicks and Miss Hampton, I suppose."

"I don't think I shall overstudy to-night," announced Miriam, a little later, as she rose from the table. "I'm going for a walk. Want to go with me?"

"I'm sorry," replied Irene regretfully, "but I've a frightfully hard chemistry lesson ahead of me to-night."

It had been an unusually balmy April and now that the moon was at the full, the Overton girls

took advantage of the fine nights to walk up and down College Street or the campus. Sure of finding some one she knew, Miriam slipped on her sweater, and, disdaining a hat, strolled down the street toward the campus. Exchanging numerous greetings with students, she wandered aimlessly across the campus toward a seat built against a tree where she and Grace had had more than one quiet session.

As she neared the seat, which was somewhat in the shadow, she gave a little startled exclamation. A girl was crouching at the darkest end of the seat, her face hidden in her hands. Turning away, Miriam was about to recross the campus when the utter despondency of the girl's attitude caused her to go back. Stopping directly in front of the bowed figure, she said gently, "Can I help you?"

The girl rose, and without answering was about to hurry away, when Miriam, after one swift glance at her face, ran after her, exclaiming, "Wait a moment, Miss Taylor!"

Mildred Taylor stopped and eyed Miriam defiantly. Despite her expression of bravado, she looked as though she had been crying. "What do you want?" she asked in a low voice.

"To talk with you," said Miriam boldly, stepping forward and slipping her arm through Mildred's. "Shall we sit down here and begin?

All my friends have deserted me to-night. There were ever so many vacant places at the dinner table. I noticed you were away, too."

"I—I—have—haven't had any dinner," faltered Mildred. Then, staring disconsolately at her companion for an instant, she dropped her head on her arm and gave way to violent sobbing. "I am so miserable," she wailed.

Miriam sat silent, touched by Mildred's distress, yet undecided what to do. Things were evidently going badly with the "cute" little girl. "She has done something she is sorry for," was Miriam's reflection. After a slight deliberation she said gently, "Is there anything you wish to tell me, Miss Taylor?"

Mildred raised her head, regarding Miriam with troubled, hopeless eyes. Miriam took one of the little girl's hands in hers. "Do not be afraid to tell me," she said earnestly. "I am your friend."

"You wouldn't be if you knew what a miserable, contemptible coward I am," muttered Mildred. "I can't tell you anything. Please go away." Her head dropped to her arm again.

Miriam, still holding her other hand, patted it comfortingly. "No one is infallible, Miss Taylor. I once felt just as you do to-night. Only I am quite sure that my fault was much graver than yours can possibly be."

Mildred raised her head with a jerk. She looked at Miriam incredulously. "I don't think *you* ever did anything very contemptible," she said sceptically.

"Let me tell you about it," replied Miriam soberly. "Then you can judge for yourself. The person whom I wronged has long since forgiven me, but I can never quite forgive myself or forget. It was during my first year in high school that I began behaving very badly toward a new girl in the freshman class, of whom I was jealous. I was the star pupil of the class until she came, then she proved herself my equal if not my superior in class standing, and I tried in every way to discredit her in the eyes of her teachers and her friends. At the end of the freshman year, a sum of money was offered as a prize to the freshman who averaged highest in her final examinations. Feeling sure that this other girl would win it, I managed, with the help of some one as dishonest as myself, to gain possession of the examination questions, but before I had finished with them, I was obliged to drop them in a hurry, to escape discovery by the principal. By the merest chance the girl I disliked happened along just in time to be suspected of tampering with the papers. But she had friends who fought loyally for her and cleared her of the suspicion.

"She won the prize. Nothing was ever said to me about it, but I knew that the principal and at least four girls in school knew what I had done. When I entered the sophomore class in the fall I felt a positive hatred for this girl and for her friends. I did all sorts of cruel, despicable things that year, and succeeded in dividing my class into two factions who opposed each other at every point.

"Toward the last of the year I grew tired of being so disagreeable. My conscience began to trouble me seriously. Then, one day, the two girls I despised did me a great service, and my enmity toward them died out forever.

"I can't begin to tell you how differently I felt after I had acknowledged my fault and been forgiven. Those girls are my dearest friends now. You know them, too."

"You—you don't mean Miss Harlowe and Miss Pierson?" asked Mildred in a low tone, her eyes fixed upon Miriam.

Miriam nodded. "Grace and Anne are the most charitable girls I ever knew," she said softly. "If they were not they would never have forgiven me. Anne was the girl who won the prize. Grace was one of the friends who stood by her. If you feel that you have done some one an injustice, you will not be happy until you have righted matters. If the person

refuses to forgive you, you at least will have done your part."

"I can't go to the—the—person and tell her," faltered Mildred. "I should die of humiliation."

"But you don't wish to go away from Overton carrying this burden with you," persisted Miriam. "It will weigh heavily upon you when you come back next fall—"

"I'm not coming back next fall," mumbled Mildred. "I shall never again be happy at Overton."

"Brace up, and square things with the other girl, and you'll feel differently," retorted Miriam.

"If it were any one else besides Miss Harlowe," began Mildred.

"Oh, I am so sorry you told me her name!" exclaimed Miriam regretfully. "Now that I know it is Grace, however, I shall redouble my advice about going to her. You need have no fear that she will not forgive you. Grace never holds grudges."

"I can't do it," declared Mildred tremulously, "I am afraid."

Miriam looked at her companion rather doubtfully. "I think Grace is the person with whom to talk this matter over," she declared. "Suppose we go over to Wayne Hall now? She went

to dinner at Vinton's with Mabel Ashe, but she must be at the hall by this time."

"Oh, I can't," gasped Mildred nervously. "Yes, yes, I will if you will come with me while I tell her."

"I think it would be better for you to go to her by yourself," said Miriam dubiously.

"I can't do it," protested Mildred miserably. "Please, please come with me."

"Then, let us go now," returned Miriam decisively. "We may catch Grace at home and alone."

During the walk across the campus the two girls exchanged no words. Mildred was trying to summon all her courage in order to make the dreaded confession.

Miriam was thinking of the day that belonged to the long ago when she had confessed her fault, and, joining hands with Anne Pierson and Grace Harlowe, had sworn eternal friendship. She felt only the deepest sympathy for the unhappy little girl at her side, for having been through a similar experience she understood clearly the struggle that was going on in Mildred's mind.

Twice the little freshman stopped short, declaring she could not and would not go on, and each time, with infinite patience, Miriam buoyed and restored to firmness her shaking resolution.

"You do not know Grace Harlowe," Miriam

said as they neared Wayne Hall, "or you would not be afraid to go to her and tell her what you have just told me. She is neither revengeful nor unforgiving, and I am sure that she will be only too glad to help you begin all over again."

"But not here at Overton," quavered Mildred.

"You can decide that later," Miriam said kindly, as they entered the house. But she smiled to herself, for she felt reasonably sure that Mildred would come back to Overton for her sophomore year.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A FAULT CONFESSED

GRACE came home from Vinton's with the firm intention of putting in a full evening of study. "It is only half-past eight," she exulted. "I'll have plenty of time for everything. I suppose Anne won't be home until the last minute's grace."

As she passed through the hall to the stairs she poked her head inquisitively into the living room. Three or four girls sat at the library table industriously engaged in writing. Grace turned away without disturbing them, and went quietly up the stairs. As she walked down the hall to her own room she noticed that Miriam's room was dark.

"I wonder where the girls are!" Grace exclaimed. "I didn't know they were to be away to-night, too. Perhaps they have gone for a walk." Grace lighted the gas in her own room and, hanging up her hat, sat down in the Morris chair, beside the table on which lay her books piled ready for work. "If no one bothers me for the next hour and the girls obligingly stay away, the rest will be easy," she smiled to herself as she worked at her French.

At five minutes of ten she closed her text book on chemistry with a triumphant bang. "Nothing left to do now but my theme and that can wait until to-morrow night. I think I'll read until the girls come in." Grace reached for her book, which lay on the table conveniently near her, opened it at the place she had marked and began to read. She had not read more than two or three pages when, through the half opened door, came the sound of voices.

Grace's gray eyes opened in surprise as Miriam Nesbit walked into the room followed by Mildred Taylor.

"I thought you would be here," greeted Miriam.

Grace rose and walked toward Mildred. Without the slighest show of hesitation she held out her hand. "I am glad to see you, Mildred. Why haven't you come in before?" she asked frankly.

Mildred looked from Miriam to Grace. "I can't tell you why!" she exclaimed in a choked, frightened voice. "I thought I could, but I can't." She began to cry softly.

Grace sprang to her side, and, placing her arm about the little girl's waist, said soothingly, "Don't cry, and don't tell us anything you don't wish to tell. I am so glad you came at all. The early part of the year I thought we were going

to be friends. I am sorry I hurt your feelings on the night of the sophomore reception. I told you so then, but I am afraid you thought I didn't mean what I said."

"It wasn't that," quavered Mildred, wiping her eyes. "It was—it was—I had no business to take it. It was stealing!"

Miriam looked sharply at Mildred's distressed face, as though trying to gain some inkling of what was to come. Grace's expression was one of anxious concern. Neither girl spoke.

"I might as well tell you, Grace," went on Mildred in a low, shamed voice. "I am the person who stole your theme. I found it at the foot of the stairs. I did not look at the name written on it until I was in my own room. I ought to have given it to you at once, but I stopped to read it. It was so clever I wished I had written it. Themes are my weak point, and Miss Duncan had criticised my work so severely that I was feeling blue and discouraged. Then came the temptation to take your theme, copy it, and hand it in as my own. You had lost it, so you would never know what became of it. You could write another theme as easily as you had written that. It did occur to me that you might be able to rewrite that particular theme from memory. So I changed the title of your theme, copied it that night and changed the end-

ing a little and took particular pains to hand it in early the next morning, so that if any suspicion were aroused it would not fall on me, but on you. It was thoroughly contemptible in me, and after I handed in the theme I felt like a criminal. When Miss Duncan sent for me, I grew frightened and instead of owning to what I had done I told more lies and tried to make it appear that you were the real offender. At first she believed me, but afterward she didn't, and made me admit that I had lied. When she told me about promising you that she would give me another chance and that you neither knew nor cared to know my name, I could hardly believe it. Since that time I've never dared to speak to you. I have been so dreadfully ashamed." Her voice broke.

"Don't think about it ever again," comforted Grace. "Everyone is likely to make mistakes. I think you have suffered enough for yours. I am sure you would never do any such thing again."

Mildred shook her head vigorously. "Never," she declared sadly.

Miriam, who had listened to the little girl's confession, an inscrutable expression on her dark face, said practically, "Was there anything besides what you have told us that made you unhappy to-night?"

"Why—why," stammered Mildred. "Yes, there was. How did you know?"

"I didn't know," declared Miriam dryly. "I just wondered."

"It was something that made me unhappy, yet glad, too," said Mildred, her face flushing. "I thought I hated Grace and said horrid things about her to two other girls I know, who are not her friends. To-night I was with them at Martell's, and I quarreled with them about you girls. Ever since I heard Savelli play at your entertainment I have felt differently about everything. His music brought me to my real self and made me realize how small and mean and contemptible I was. I discovered that it was not you but myself I hated, and when these girls began to say things about you, all of a sudden I found myself standing up for you as staunchly as ever I could. Then we quarreled and I got up from the table and almost ran out of Martell's.

"I walked and walked until I was all tired out. Then I sat down on that seat by the tree where Miriam found me. In defending you, Grace, I found myself. I saw clearly that my college life was all wrong. The mean things I had done stared me in the face. The theme was the worst of all. No wonder I cried. Now that I've told you everything I am happier than I have been since last fall. Next year I am going to start all

over again in some other college where no one knows me."

"Besides yourself, there are only three who know, Miriam, Miss Duncan and I." said Grace slowly. "When Miss Duncan sent for me about the theme I told myself then that, although I had no desire to know the name of the other girl, if ever I should learn her identity I would try to be the best friend she ever had. I am ready to keep my word, Mildred, if you are ready to come back to Overton next year and help me keep it."

Mildred glanced timidly from Grace to Miriam. "I'd love to come back," she faltered, "only I'm afraid you girls would never believe in me again."

"My friends did," reminded Miriam softly, extending her hand to Mildred. "I believe in you now."

"Of course we will believe in you," declared Grace cheerfully. "Come back next fall and give us a chance to show you that we trust you."

"I will," answered Mildred with solemn resolution, "but you shall give me the chance to show you that your trust is not misplaced. Good night," she put out her hand again rather uncertainly. Grace's hand went quickly out to meet it, holding it in a warm, friendly clasp, and Mildred went to her room a changed girl.

"How did you happen to be her confessor,

Miriam?'' asked Grace wonderingly, after the freshman had gone.

Miriam related the evening's happenings.

''I never even suspected her,'' said Grace. ''I believed her to be angry with me for overlooking her at the reception. I always tried not to think of any particular girl as being guilty of taking my theme. It has turned out beautifully, hasn't it?''

''Yes,'' nodded Miriam. ''As a matter of fact everything generally does turn out well in the end if one has the patience to wait.''

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CONCLUSION

"TWO more days, then good-bye to Overton," mourned Elfreda Briggs sadly. The stout girl was seated on the floor, the contents of her trunk spread broadcast about her.

"Elfreda would like to stay here and study all summer," remarked Miriam slyly to Anne, who was watching Elfreda's movements with amused eyes.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't," retorted Elfreda good-naturedly. "I am as anxious to go home as the rest of you, but I'm sorry to leave here, too. What's the use in explaining?" she grumbled, catching sight of her friends' laughing faces. "You girls know what I mean, only you will tease me."

"Never mind, we won't tease It any more," said Miriam soothingly.

"There is only one thing you can do to convince me that you are in earnest," stipulated Elfreda.

"Name it," laughed Anne.

"Invite me to a banquet, and have cakes and lemonade," was the calm request.

"I thought you were strongly opposed to sweet things," commented Anne.

"Not at the sad, sorrowful end of the sophomore year," returned Elfreda, impressively. "Besides, lemonade isn't fattening."

"And it will be such splendid exercise for you to make it," added Miriam mischievously.

Elfreda looked disapprovingly at Miriam, then a broad smile illuminated her round face. 'So nice of you to think about the exercise," she beamed affectedly. "Lead me to the lemons."

Miriam rose, took Elfreda by the arm, and leading her to the closet, pointed upward to the shelf. Elfreda grasped the paper bag with a giggle. Then Miriam led her calmly out again, just in time to encounter Grace, Mabel Ashe and Frances Marlton, who, in passing down the hall, had heard voices, and could not resist stopping for a moment.

"What is going on here?" asked Mabel curiously. "Why is J. Elfreda in leading strings?"

"She is taking exercise," replied Miriam gravely. "J. Elfreda, explain to the lady."

"This exercise is compulsory," grinned Elfreda. "No exercise, no lemonade. Of course, you will stay and have some."

"Of course," agreed Mabel. "I may not have a chance for a very long time to drink lemonade again with the Wayne Hallites."

"You mustn't say that," remonstrated Grace. "Remember, you are going to visit me at Oakdale. Elfreda is going to visit Miriam. Can't you can arrange to come, too, Frances?"

"I'm sorry," declared Frances, shaking her head, "but we are going to sail for Europe within a week after I reach home. I shall have to say good-bye in earnest on Thursday. But I'll write you, and make you a visit some time."

"How comfortingly definite. I'll see you again during the next hundred years," jeered Mabel.

"You know I don't mean that," reproached Frances.

"I do intend before the end,
This happy couple shall meet again,"

chanted Elfreda as she peered into the lemonade pitcher.

"Precisely," laughed Frances. "Did you play 'Needle's eye' when you were a little girl, Elfreda?"

"Yes, and 'London Bridge' and 'King William was King James's son,' too. I always loved to play, but was hardly ever chosen because I was so fat and ungainly. I remember once, though, when I went to a children's party in a pale blue silk dress that made me look like a young mountain. I thought myself superlatively beautiful, however, and the rest of the lit-

tle girls were so impressed that I was a great social triumph, and made up for the times when I had been passed by," concluded Elfreda humorously.

"Your adventures are worthy of recording and publishing," said Anne lightly. "Write a book and call it 'The Astonishing Adventures of Elfreda'."

The stout girl eyed Anne reflectively, the lemon squeezer poised in one hand. "That's a good idea," she said coolly. "I'll do it when I come back next fall. Now I'm not going to say another word until I finish this lemonade, so don't speak to me." When she left the room for ice water, Mabel Ashe observed warmly, "She is a credit to 19—, isn't she?"

"Yes," returned Grace. "They are beginning to find it out, too."

"Your sophomore days have been peaceful, compared with last year," remarked Frances Marlton. "Certain girls have kept strictly in the background."

"We have not been obliged to resort to ghost parties this year," reminded Mabel Ashe. "It requires ghosts to lay ghosts, you know."

Grace could have remarked with truth that certain ghosts had not been laid as effectually as she desired, but wisely keeping her own counsel she was about to essay a change of subject when

the return of Elfreda with the lemonade served her purpose.

"'How can I bear to leave thee?'" quoted Mabel sentimentally, as she and Frances reluctantly rose to go half an hour later. "I hope you feel properly flattered. Graduates' attentions are at a premium this week. They ought to be, too, when one stops to think that it takes four years to reach that dizzy height of popularity. Four long years of slavish toil, my children. Observe my careworn air, my rapidly graying locks, my deeply-lined countenance."

"Yes, observe them," grinned Elfreda. "You look younger than Anne, and she looks like a mere chee—ild. Don't forget that you are going to send us pictures of you in your cap and gown, will you?" she added, looking affectionately at the two pretty seniors, whose help and kindly interest had meant much to her individually.

"We will see you to the door," laughed Grace, slipping her arm through Mabel's.

"Did you ever find the girl?" asked Mabel in a low tone. "You know the one I mean. I have often wondered about her."

"Yes," replied Grace in the same guarded tones. "I can't tell even you her name, but everything has been explained."

Mabel pressed Grace's arm in silent under-

standing. "Good-bye," she said, "we shall see you again before we leave Overton."

"You had better come into our room and finish the lemonade," declared Miriam, as they watched their guests go down the walk.

"But I haven't begun my packing yet, and I have so many things to do and so many girls to see that I ought not waste a minute."

"Time spent with us is never wasted," reminded Elfreda significantly.

"Quite true," responded Grace gaily. "I am sorry I had to be reminded. To prove my sorrow I will help you with your packing, when I ought to be doing my own."

"Come on, then," challenged Elfreda. She ran lightly up the stairs, her three friends at her heels.

"I'll pour the lemonade while you and Grace pack," volunteered Miriam.

"I choose to do nothing," said Anne lazily. "I am going to work all summer. I need a little rest now."

"You won't know where you are to be for the summer until Mr. Forest writes, will you?" asked Miriam.

"The Originals will be lonesome without you, Anne," mourned Grace. "You must be sure to visit me. That is, unless you are too far west."

"I am going to have a visitor of my own," an-

nounced Elfreda proudly. "You can never guess who it is."

"I know," laughed Anne, after a moment's reflection. "It is the Anar— Miss Atkins, I mean."

"Who told you?" demanded Elfreda. "It is true, though. She is coming to Fairview the last two weeks in July, and I am going to give her the time of her life. Just think, girls, she has never had any girl friends until she came here. Her mother died when she was a baby, and a prim old aunt kept house for them. Her father is Professor Archibald Atkins, that Natural Scientist who went to Africa and was held captive by a tribe of savages for two years.

"Living with the heathen didn't improve him, for when he came home he behaved so queerly that people thought him crazy. Then the aunt, who was the professor's sister, died, and poor Laura had to live alone with her father in a great big country house. Finally, she grew so tired of it she asked him to send her to college. She had always had a tutor, so she was ready for the entrance examinations, but she had never associated with other girls and didn't know much about them. I can't feel sorry enough for calling her names and imitating her. We had a long talk at Martell's the other night and I am going to be her knight errant from now on."

"You found the rainbow side of your sophomore year in helping some one else, didn't you, Elfreda?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," rejoined Elfreda bluntly.

"I know you don't," laughed Grace. "It was nothing much. Last year at this time Anne and I were lamenting because we couldn't be freshmen all over again, and Anne said that being a sophomore was sure to have its rainbow side."

"It has been the nicest year of my life," said Elfreda earnestly. "If being a junior is any nicer than being a sophomore—well—you will have to show me. There, I've ended by using slang. But I've found my rainbow side in another way, too."

"Name it," challenged Miriam mischievously.

"By losing twenty pounds," announced Elfreda, with proud triumph. "I weigh one hundred and forty pounds now, and next fall you will see me on the team, or it won't be my fault."

"I hope I shall have time for basketball," said Grace. "There will be so many other things. Remember, girls, if during vacation you think of any good plan for the Semper Fidelis Club to make money, make a note of it. Just because we have money in our treasury, we mustn't become lazy. We will find plenty of uses for every cent

we can earn. There are dozens of girls struggling through Overton who need help."

"You never told us to what girls you and Arline played Santa Claus last winter, Grace," said Elfreda reproachfully.

"And I never will," laughed Grace, "and Arline won't tell, either."

"I know something, too," declared Elfreda, "but I'm not as stingy as Grace. I know who poked that envelope with the ten dollars in it under Grace's door."

"Who?" came simultaneously from the three girls.

"Mildred Taylor," replied Elfreda. "I saw her do it. I was just coming down the hall that night as she slipped it under the door and ran away. I never told any one, because I could see she didn't want any one to know she did it."

"Elfreda always sees more than appears on the surface," commented Miriam mischievously.

"Elfreda's energy has inspired me to go to my room and begin my own packing," declared Anne, rising.

"I'll go with you," volunteered Grace. "I think Elfreda can be trusted to finish her packing by herself."

"I think I'll accomplish more, at any rate," declared Elfreda pointedly.

"It is half over, Anne, dear," said Grace, almost wistfully, as they strolled down the hall, school girl fashion, their arms about each other's waists.

"Our life at Overton, you mean?" asked Anne.

Grace nodded. "I was sure I should never like college as well as high school, but I've found it even nicer."

"And we are going to like being juniors best of all," predicted Anne.

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